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Three Kinds of Christian Giving

A Commentary by Jason Curry



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Advent is the time of the Christian year in which we prepare ourselves to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a time within the liturgical calendar which precedes Christmas and succeeds Pentecost. The word Advent is a derivative from a Latin root which mean "coming" or "arrival," and during the season of Advent we are able to join in with Christians throughout the world who are beginning to celebrative the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Much has been made about the need to give during the Christmas season. Like many of you I've heard countless messages about the commercialization of Christmas, and I too stand in agreement with many of you who continue to assert that Jesus is the real reason for the Christmas season.

The second chapter of the gospel according to Matthew gives us a guide for three types of giving as we approach the Christmas season. When the three kings saw the baby Jesus "they presented unto him gifts of gold,

and frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:1-11)." The first type of Christian giving involves the giving of a tangible gift. Yes, there is something significant about an actual gift that conveys a distinct and important message about the meaning of Christmas. We may send a card, contribute to a food bank, donate a pair of shoes or give a coat to someone in need. Indeed, there is something about the nature of giving that you can feel that is still in accord with the eternal truth of the Christian message. The second kind of giving that is exemplified by the wise men this text concerns their physical presence with Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus. The text says: "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him (Matthew 2:11)." I used to administer communion (the bread and the wine) in nursing homes. I talked with people who wanted to come to church but were unable to attend services because of their health. The gift of presence, which includes

visiting family members as well as people in need, is an important as, if not more important than, the giving of a physical gift. The third kind of Christian giving that is embraced by the Christian message involves the giving of our lives back to God. John 3:16 reminds us that God gave his only son for our redemption. As we spiritually prepare ourselves for Christmas, the Advent season provides us with a wonderful opportunity to dedicate or rededicate our lives to God. Jesus, the son of God, is still the reason for the Christmas season.