

“**Gifted**” Sermon for January 7, 2018, Ephesians 3:1-12, Matthew 2:1-12 Epiphany of Our Lord

[\[first picture\]](#)

2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being (Gospel of John 1:2-3a).

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[\[picture\]](#)

The week after Christmas is often a time of returns, of re-gifting. The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians that he was gifted in order to re-gift Christ to the Gentiles. Paul explained, our giftedness enables us to cross boundaries, bring down walls of division and create beloved community. We are gifted by God that we might recycle our gifts to others.

[\[picture\]](#)

The wise men brought gifts to Mary for the baby Jesus. In a sense they, too, were re-gifting. They were offering gold, frankincense and myrrh. Christ as the divine Word of God, the agency of God which spoke and brought all things into being, was the one

who gifted the earth with these gifts. John writes that without Christ nothing was made. The wise men were re-gifting. They were simply offering what God through Christ had brought into being.

They knew who they were in the presence of. They knew Jesus was to be the great high priest for all people (including gentiles like them). Their finding the baby Jesus is Christ's fulfillment of Abraham's promise for the Gentiles. Thus, the Epiphany is an affirmation of universal salvation. The gift was Christ, their presence at his birth, God's re-gifting of Christ.

They bowed down in humility and reverence and presented their best gifts and offerings. We are therefore challenged to exercise our giftedness by re-gifting Christ. The Epiphany begins the manifestations of our re-gifting Christ to the world.

[[picture](#)]

The Gospels give us the ultimate example of the re-gifting of a faithful disciple of Christ. The gift was a special box of "ointment of spikenard very precious," the contents of which a woman anointed the head of Jesus as he sat at supper in the house of Simon the leper (Matthew 26:7 ; Mark 14:3 ; Luke 7:37). These boxes were made from a stone found near Alabastron in Egypt. The name was then given to the stone of which they were made. The woman "broke off" the long and narrow neck so as to reach the contents.

[[picture](#)]

Mark says (14:5) that this box of ointment was worth more than a day's wage of a laborer, or about \$240 in today's money. Mary's offering. Spikenard, also called nard, nardin, and muskroot, is a class of aromatic amber-colored essential oil derived from *Nardostachys jatamansi*, a flowering plant of the valerian family which grows in the Himalayas of

Nepal, China, and India. The oil has been used over centuries as a perfume, a traditional medicine, or in religious ceremonies across a the earth.

As she brought the expensive box of Spikenard to anoint Christ and bear witness to him to the human family, and as God empowered Paul to re-gift him to the nations beyond Israel, so God has empowered us to re-gift Christ to the world around us. Let the re-gifting begin. Amen.