

Raise your hand if you've been in a Christmas play before. In my church growing up we had these huge Christmas programs. We would start practicing in September, there was music, choreography, a play with multiple scenes, and they had like 12 shows, people had to buy tickets weeks ahead. It was a huge commitment but it was worth it because they had cookies and hot cider after every show. From probably kindergarten to my 7<sup>th</sup> grade year I was in this Christmas program. And one of the things I remember so clearly is what they would do for the wisemen. Usually we would have some crazy musical number and Mary and Joseph and a live baby would be on stage and I kid you not they would have guys carry people out on these things called Palanquins (Pal-en-keens), yes I had to look that up and how to say it. (2&3) Here are some pictures to help you visualize. So we had three kings come out on these down the isles of pews and they called the whole thing the "King's Entourage" I know... sounds absurd... But to my little elementary school self it was the coolest thing ever. Well evidently I was not cool enough to be a part of the kings entourage, which still has mental and emotional ramifications on me today. I always wanted to be in it and they always had the same people do it every year. I'm obviously not still bitter.

Anyways they had these kings dressed in fancy clothes and hats, with the pallbearers carrying them and they had these long robes that they had kids come behind and carry for the kings so they could take the gifts to Jesus on the stage. That was one of my earliest visualizations of the wisemen. I can't imagine that was very accurate. It might not be too far off what some of you might visualize, and we don't know for sure but what would have been true is that Jesus wouldn't have been a baby anymore by the time they reached him. Lets read from **Matt. 2:10-11**  
**<sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup>On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.**

Scholars estimate by the time the wisemen would have arrived it may have been two years given that's the timeframe Herod's decree accounted for. So, it wouldn't have been extravagantly dressed kings visiting a newborn but more like some wisemen visiting a house bowing down to a toddler giving gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And I can't help visualizing Jesus around Maelie's age... she's 19 months old. And man do I feel for Mary and Joseph.

These gifts the wisemen brought were very symbolic and valuable even if they would be strange gifts for us to receive in our culture. Especially to a toddler. If someone gave Maelie Myrrh she would try to eat it. It does make me think of a little holiday tradition that a lot of us have. White Elephant. We've all gotten a gift while playing that game that was just strange or of just no value. Can anyone think of some? What's something you got during a white elephant? Shout some out. So, there are some gifts that are just straight up weird but these ones were a lot more meaningful than you might assume.

Gold was obviously valuable monetarily, as it has been through history, but gold, we'll talk about next week, symbolizes the kingship of Jesus, Jesus as king. Frankincense, we talked about last week, actually symbolizes Jesus as our great High Priest who would offer His life, and yet he's one who sympathizes with us, he understands. (5)Today, we're gonna talk about the gift of myrrh, which many people probably don't know anything about Myrrh. I didn't really... but myrrh is a valuable gum-like substance that's actually used 17 different times in the Bible. Occasionally, myrrh would have been used as an antiseptic. For example, if you know the story on Jesus on the cross, they offered Him wine mixed with myrrh to dull the pain but Jesus rejected it. More

commonly though, myrrh was known as an ingredient used to embalm the dead. So myrrh, scholars agree, represents Jesus as the suffering servant or the Lamb of God who was born to die for the forgiveness of our sins.

Before we jump into our scripture for the morning Isaiah 53, who here is good at predicting things? Anyone? IF someone raises their hand: Wanna predict the superbowl really quick? And we can watch this back and see if your right. If you get that right... wow you might be a prophet...

Isaiah did something similar... maybe a little more life changing than the superbowl... He prophesied 700 years before the birth of Christ, a very detailed account of what the suffering servant, Jesus, would endure on our behalf.

Lets read our main passage today, **Isaiah 53:3-9**

He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.  
4 Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.  
5 But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.  
6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.  
7 He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.  
8 By oppression[a] and judgment he was taken away.  
Yet who of his generation protested?  
For he was cut off from the land of the living;  
for the transgression of my people he was punished.[b]  
9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked,  
and with the rich in his death,  
though he had done no violence,  
nor was any deceit in his mouth.

We will go through this piece by piece but I want to focus in on the problem first. Verse six says like sheep, we have gone astray. I promise I won't do the thing people always do when they talk about sheep. They say that they're dirty and stinky and stupid... but I am gonna do is this. I'm going to paraphrase this into something that I can definitely understand better because I'm not around sheep; Like toddlers, we have gone astray.

Show video of Maelie

For those of you that have had a toddler or been around one... they definitely go astray a lot. For example; just this last week Maelie managed to eat crayon wax, climb into and stand up in the windowsill behind our couch while I wasn't looking, fall off her toy car and hit her head on the coffee table, try to climb onto our coffee table... should I keep going? I won't for sake of time. But you get the point here. Toddlers need guidance, need help, or as Maelie would say "hep peez!"

Isaiah was basically saying we are a lost cause without a savior. We need help because we want to go our own way. But then Isaiah goes on to say; and the Lord has laid on him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all.

Now that we have an understanding of our problem lets keep reading. This, mind you was written 700 years before Jesus. Read **Isaiah 53 starting in verse 3:**

He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

<sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.

That same toddler being bowed down to and receiving gifts of frankincense gold and myrrh, became a man that suffered the most painful gruesome death to save us all. Isaiah prophesied it down to detail in parts of the book. He predicted Jesus would be born of a virgin and would be called Immanuel. And Jesus did. He came to earth just as us, human, vulnerable, he felt pain, sadness, experienced temptation, he mourned he cried. He isn't just our savior but he's a savior we can relate to, and cast our cares on. When we truly and deeply understand that, there is absolutely no reason for us to be running around distracted and lost like sheep and toddlers. He is the solution. He is our help. He is our savior.

Also as Isaiah prophesied Jesus bore our suffering. He was in so much agony that he cried out to God sweating blood asking for another way before the real pain even began. He was in the garden of gethsemane crying out to God for him save him from his fate. But he said this with you all in mind: "yet not my will but yours be done." He knew that this was the plan, that it had been prophesied about. That It was the only way for all of us to be without separation from God. So then he was betrayed and carried his own cross to his own death after being rejected by those who he came to save. He was beaten flogged, spit on, laughed at, humiliated. Hung up on a cross and left to die. There's nothing about that that doesn't scream agony and suffering. We could sit here and go into more detail about how much pain he was in physically, how gruesome and cruel crucifixion was, how alone he might have felt, but I don't think my pregnancy hormones could handle that.

As he hung on the cross and felt an unimaginable suffering, he cried out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" because he was carrying the weight of our sin and was separated from God because of it. Maybe you've felt suffering and agony like that in your own life, maybe you have felt separated from God, unable to feel him. You aren't alone.

**Isaiah 53 continues on in verse 7:**  
He was oppressed and afflicted,

yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.  
8 By oppression[a] and judgment he was taken away.  
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Like a lamb to the slaughter. Like a Passover lamb, perfect and blameless. His blood shed for us so that death would Passover us just as it did for God's people in Egypt. And that's not the only parallel here. Not only was Myrrh one of the gifts Jesus was given as a toddler but we can read in John chapter 19 that it was used to wrap his body after he died on the cross and before he was laid in the tomb. It's so obvious that this was God's will for the start, just as Isaiah prophesied. (10)God loves us even though we fall short every day. God loves us even though we don't deserve it. He loves us so much he sent his son, Jesus, who came to earth perfect and innocent and suffered and died for us. There is no greater gift and no greater love.

I wanna wrap up with one more scripture. Jesus tells us this in Luke 9 starting in verse 22:

22 And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."  
23 Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. 25 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?"

Not only was Jesus prophesying of his death and resurrection but he was declaring to us that we will face suffering and difficulties. In order to be his disciples we must deny ourselves, deny our desires, our own selfish wants. He doesn't say do A, B, and C. He doesn't say pray this prayer or read this book. He doesn't say go do more, or add more to your agenda to please me. He doesn't say attend this bible study, go to church every Sunday, or even listen to klove every day. He says deny yourself and take up your cross. Then follow me. Its surrender. Its obedience and the loss of ourselves to find ourselves in him. If Jesus can give up his life for us when he did absolutely nothing wrong, then surely we can give up our selfishness, our addictions, our judgemental hearts, our bitterness, our fear, our desires. That's the least we can do. It's a privilege and an honor to surrender and serve a god that sent his only son as a little innocent baby destined to die so that we don't have to.

What do you need you need to surrender? What do you need to deny? We all have something in the way of true surrender and something keeping us from following him. Thank God for grace and that we receive it as long as we believe but its when we really follow Jesus with our whole being that we get to experience true joy and unfathomable peace.

Christmas isn't a time I usually think about suffering or ever really think about Jesus's suffering. But I know that isn't true for all of you. Some of you might be hurting this Christmas, have wounds that won't seem to heal. Have addictions, struggles, weights your carrying. Maybe you're stressed beyond belief trying to make the holidays perfect for your family, maybe you don't have anyone to celebrate with. (12)Whatever it is, I can assure you, Jesus understands. If you feel hurt,

betrayed, misunderstood, abandoned, afraid, ashamed, anxious, lonely, he's felt it too. A man of suffering, familiar with pain. He's felt all the brokenness in the world and he still loves you so much that he carried all that for you already. He wants you to surrender to him and cast your cares on him. He wants us to devote ourselves to him and he wants to give us everlasting peace and eternal life in him.

Pray with me.

# The Gift

Gold <sup>79</sup><sub>Au</sub>  
Precious Metal  
Symbol of Kingship  
on earth  
196.967



Frankincense  
Resin from tree  
Highly fragrant  
Symbol of healing



Myrrh  
Resin from tree  
Spice for embalming  
Symbol of suffering











## Matthew 2:10-11

<sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.



# *The Gift*



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# Isaiah 53:3-9

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and with the rich in his death,  
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God loves you  
so much,  
He sent Jesus  
to save you.



## Luke 9:22-25

22 And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

23 Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. 25 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?



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