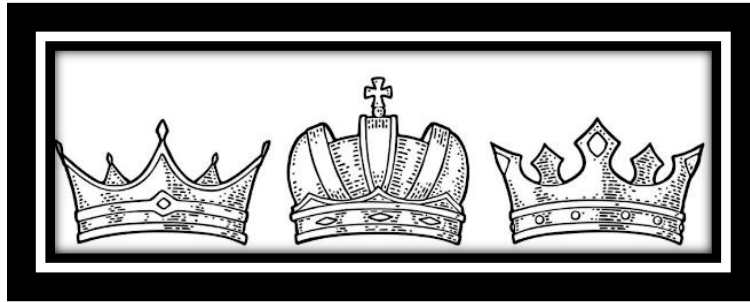


THE EPIPHANY & BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

January 8th, 2023



CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1
Church: 905-685-8294
www.christlutheransc.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon
Bulletin Announcements: Please send to secretary@christlutheransc.ca.
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

Pastor: Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com
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Secretary: Pat Kimpel secretary@christlutheransc.ca
Facebook: Lisa Gall www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC
Bulletin by email: Judy Mason chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca

A recording of Sunday's service will be uploaded to YouTube at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpING_TKTi9c_OIBbMqGwLw

Prayer: O God, our Maker and Redeemer, who wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature, grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:

Monday: 1 Thess. 5: 5-11 Wednesday: 1 John 2: 7-11 Friday: John 3: 16-21
Tuesday: Eph. 5: 8-14 Thursday: 1 John 1: 5-10 Saturday: 1 John 2: 12-17

Musician: 10 a.m. – The Band
Reader: 10 a.m. – Daniel Figueroa
Greeters: 10 a.m. – Gary & Wendy Kuenzel

January 2023 Worship Schedule

January 8: Epiphany/Jesus' Baptism – Creative Communion
January 15: Epiphany 2 – Divine Service Setting Three
January 21: Epiphany 3 – Divine Service Setting One Communion
January 29: Epiphany 4 – Morning Praise

EVENTS THIS WEEK:

Tuesday, 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.: Precious Moments
Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.: Church Council Meeting
Thursday, 10-11:30 a.m.: SOUL
Next Sunday, 9 a.m.: Sunday School

PRECIOUS MOMENTS: Resumes this Tuesday, January 10. If you or someone you know would benefit from friendly conversation, a time for kids to play & sing; hear a Bible story and make a craft - please join us Tuesdays in the nursery area. Coffee and tea are always on.

SUNDAY SCHOOL: will meet next **Sunday, January 15 at 9:00 a.m.** and then in February resume our schedule of the first 2 Sundays of each month.

YOUTH CONFIRMATION CLASS: meet again **Sunday, January 22.** Please look on the Pastor Todd Youth Catechism Google Classroom for any and all communications.

SOUL: Resumes Thursday, January 12.



Tree and Decorations Take Down

Saturday, January 14, 4:00 p.m.

JOIN US AND LEND A HELPING HAND SUPPER TO FOLLOW

Please sign up in narthex if you plan to attend!

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!!

LWML – Mary Martha:

HAPPY NEW YEAR! As we start a New Year, we remember it is full of **your** Hope and **your** Promise. "...And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. *"Philippians 4: 7*

The following is our schedule for our Winter/Spring program (**more details will follow**):

- Jan 17, 7:00 pm: Bible Study led by **our adopted** Seminary Student, Jason
- Feb 21, 7:00 pm: Speaker from the Mobile Closet
- March 21, 7:00 pm: Quilt tying and stamp trimming
- April 18, 7:00 pm: Speaker - Jude Mersereau
- May 16, 7:00 pm: Bible Study - Pastor Todd (tentative)
- June 10: Potluck (Details to follow)

Please feel free to attend any or all of our Tuesday night events! **January is a very special meeting since we will be disbursing the funds that God so graciously provided from our Fall Yard Sale and November Bazaar to different mission projects.**

(If you have any questions, call Lorraine at 905 964 5837)

2023 DONATION ENVELOPES have arrived and you can find yours in your Church mailbox. If you don't have a mailbox, please look for your envelopes on the table in the Narthex. If you don't have a mailbox and would like a mailbox, please let Pat know at secretary@christlutheransc.ca or call 905-685-8294 (Thursday or Friday morning).

GREETERS: A big thank you to everyone who has assisted with greeting over the last year. A special thank you to Tom Bailey for helping out. A new sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board and we would ask that anyone who is interested in assisting for the coming year to please sign up. It is a wonderful opportunity to get to know everyone in the congregation.

FLOWERS have been placed on the altar this morning to the Glory of God by Gail Julie to celebrate the occasion of her husband, George Julie's Birthday.

NOTE FROM JUDY MASON: After several years of emailing the bulletin I would like to find a replacement. Please contact Judy if you would like to take over emailing her list of weekly bulletins to: chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca or 905-641-7546

CREATIVE HOLY COMMUNION

The Epiphany & Baptism of our Lord

January 8, 2023 + 10 AM Worship

OPENING HYMN: “Angels From The Realms Of Glory” # 367 VS 1, 3 & 4

**Angels from the realms of glory, wing your flight o’er all the earth;
all who sang creation’s story, now proclaim Messiah’s birth.
Come and worship, come and worship; worship Christ, the newborn King.**

**Saints, before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear;
Suddenly the Lord, descending, in His temple shall appear.
Come and worship, come and worship; worship Christ, the newborn King.**

**All creation, join in praising God, the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising – to th’eternal Three in One.
Come and worship, come and worship; worship Christ, the newborn King.**

James Montgomery, 1816, public domain

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Arise, shine; for your Light has come,

and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

Nations shall come to your light,

and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Let us then confess our sins in the presence of God and one another: *[Brief prayerful silence]*

Lord God, Heavenly Father, I am a sinner and I have sinned against you, not only in my words and actions, but also in my secret thoughts and desires which I cannot fully know or understand, but which you know completely. I am sorry that I have displeased you, and with Your help, repent of the evil I have done. For the sake of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, have mercy on me, forgive my sins, and graciously strengthen me in my weakness. Amen.

Receive the forgiveness Christ Jesus Himself has won for you by His passion, death and resurrection. As a called and ordained servant of the Christ, and by His command, I forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

SPOKEN KYRIE:

O Lord, have mercy on us; O Christ, have mercy on us; O Lord, have mercy on us and grant us Your peace. Amen.

EPIPHANY HYMN OF PRAISE:

“The First Noel”

**The first Noel the angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep
On a cold winter’s night that was so deep
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel Born is the King of Israel**

**They looked up and saw a bright star
Shining in the east, beyond them far
And to the earth it gave a great light
And so it continued both day and night
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel Born is the King of Israel**

**Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord
That has made heaven and earth of naught
And with his blood mankind has bought
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel Born is the King of Israel.**

Cornwall, England, 1400s, 1823 1st publicized; public domain

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

We pray: Loving Father, You led the wise men by the shining of a star to adore Jesus Christ, the newborn King, and You anointed Him at His baptism by John in the Jordan River with the Holy Spirit, revealing Him as Your own dear Son, our Saviour. Thank You for making us Your children by water and the Spirit in our baptism. Keep us faithful to You throughout our lives that we bear fruits worthy of our calling as Your witnesses in the world. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE WORD

The Old Testament: *Isaiah 60: 1-6*

Epiphany Reading

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Epistle: *Ephesians 3: 1-12*

Epiphany Reading

[St. Paul writes:] This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given to me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Holy Gospel:

St. Matthew 3: 13-17

Jesus' Baptism Reading

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Matthew, the 3rd chapter: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You, O Christ.**

THE NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by Whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man. And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, Whose kingdom will have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life + of the world to come. Amen.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

GOSPEL SONG:

"How Many Kings"

Martel & Germain © 2006

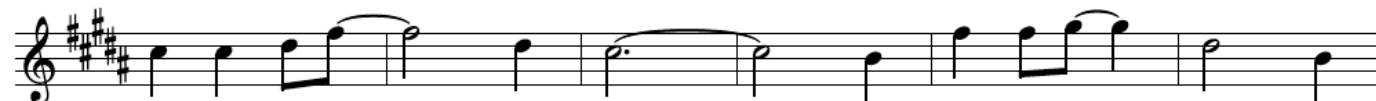
1. Fol - low the star to a place un - ex - pect - ted. _ Would you be - lieve. _
 _ af - ter all _ we've pro - ject - ed, a child in a _ man - ger? _
 _ Low - ly and small, the weak - est of all, _ un -
 -like - li - est _ he - ro wrapped in His _ moth - er's shawl—just a child. _
 _ Is this who we've wait - ed for? _ 'Cause



how ma - ny — kings stepped down from their — thrones? How ma - ny —



lords have a - ban - doned their — homes? How ma - ny — greats have



be - come the least — for me? — And how ma - ny — gods have



poured out their hearts to ro - mance a world that is torn all a - part? .



— How ma - ny — fa - thers gave up their sons for me? —

2



— 2. Bring - ing out gifts for the new - born Sav - ior



all that we have, wheth - er cost - ly or meek, be - cause we be - lieve. —



— Gold for His hon - or and frank - in - cense for — His



plea - sure and myrrh for the cross He'll suf - fer. Do you be - lieve? Is

D.S. al Coda



this who we've wait - ed for? —



— On - ly one — did that — for me. —

Oh, all for me,

100

ah. Ah,

ah. All for me,

all for you. All for me,

How ma - ny kings stepped down from their

thrones? How ma - ny lords have a - ban - doned their homes?

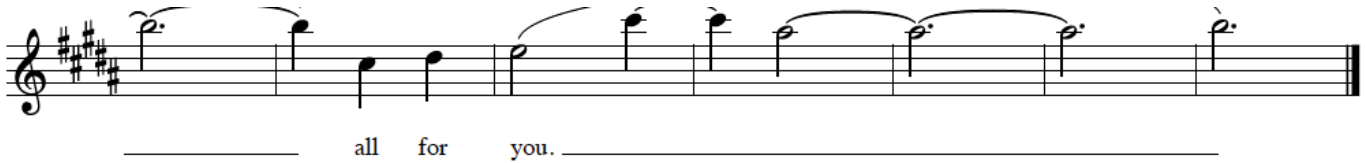
How ma - ny greats have be - come the least? How ma - ny gods have

poured out their hearts to ro - mance a world that is torn all a -

-part? How ma - ny fa - thers gave up their sons for me?

On - ly one did that for me.

Oh, all for me,



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MESSAGE

OFFERINGS *are gathered*

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH:

We thank you Heavenly Father for sending your dear Son Jesus to bring the light of life to those who were in darkness and in death's shadow. Help your Church throughout the world to be bold in sharing this good news with all people. May your light shine on our nation's leaders and people so that we may live in peace and justice may prevail. Heavenly Father: **shine your light on us.**

As the wise men knelt and worshipped the infant Jesus and offered to Him their precious gifts, lead us to join them in their worship and to offer up all we have in service to our Lord. Heavenly Father: **shine your light on us.**

Bless all the baptized, remembering and giving thanks for their Baptism. Thank you for adopting us as brothers and sisters of your dear Son, and for filling us with the same Spirit that descended upon him. Make us radiant with his holiness and lovely with his compassion. Let us glorify you in all we say and do. Heavenly Father: **shine your light on us.**

Put your Spirit upon the leaders of this and every nation. Establish your justice through them throughout the world. Give them the wisdom and the will to protect and provide for their people, especially those who are like "bruised reeds and faintly burning wicks." Make them prefer mercy over might; righteousness over renown; and honesty over hastiness. Heavenly Father: **shine your light on us.**

We place in your care all who are in trouble. Remember those in need, those who are sick, those who are disabled and especially those who suffer because they bear your name. Comfort them with your Holy Spirit, so that in their distress they may accept your fatherly will and rejoice in your saving help. Heavenly Father: **shine your light on us.**

Into Your hands, Heavenly Father, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, which we have come to know in the face of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. **Amen.**

THE SACRAMENT

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts! **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

It is truly good, right and joyful that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord; And so now we praise You, that You have sent to us Your only-begotten Son, and that in Him, being found in human form as man, You have revealed the fullness of Your glory. And so, with the Church on earth and all the company of Heaven, we praise Your name and join their un-ending hymn:

HOLY HOLY HOLY

"Hosanna, Hosanna"

Carl Tuttle © 1985 Mercy Pub.

1. Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, Ho - san - na in the high -
2. Glo - ry, glo - ry, Glo - ry to the King of
est; Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, Ho - san - na in the high -
kings; Glo - ry, glo - ry, Glo - ry to the King of
est. Lord, we lift up Your name,
kings. With hearts full of praise; Be ex - alt - ed, O
Lord my God, Ho - san - na in the high est.

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Holy God, Mighty Lord, gracious Father, endless is Your mercy and eternal Your reign. You have filled all creation with light and life. Heaven and earth are full of Your glory. By faith the saints of old held fast to Your promise of things hoped for though not yet seen, leaving an example for us who walk now by faith and not by sight. All praise and thanks be to You, eternal God, for keeping Your ancient Word, Your holy promise, and sending Your Son Jesus Christ, Whose life, death, and resurrection for our salvation we remember as He comes to us in this meal of His Holy Body and Precious Blood. Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

LORD'S PRAYER: *Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name....*

THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION:

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, on the night in which He was betrayed, took bread and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Take, eat; This is My + Body which is given for you, this do, in remembrance of Me. In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying "Drink of it all of you, this cup is the New Testament in My + Blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

And also with you.

LAMB OF GOD



O Jes-us Chri-st, True Lamb of God; the sins of the world, You



Take a -- way. Have mer - cy on us, Lord, we pray;



And bless us with Your peace; A -- men.

DISTRIBUTION

COMMUNION HYMNS:

"Gentle Mary"

LSB # 374

**Gentle Mary laid her Child lowly in a manger;
There He lay, the undefiled, to the world a Stranger:
Such a Babe in such a place, can He be the Saviour?
Ask the saved of all the race who have found His favour.**

**Angels sang about His birth; wise men sought and found Him;
Heaven's star shone brightly forth, glory all around Him:
Shepherds saw the wondrous sight, heard the angels singing;
All the plains were lit that night, all the hills were ringing.**

**Gentle Mary laid her Child lowly in a manger;
He is still the undefiled, but no more a stranger:
Son of God, of humble birth, beautiful the story;
Praise His Name in all the earth, hail the King of glory!**

Words: Joseph Cook, 1859-1933; Music: Good King Wenceslas, 1582 Public Domain

"New Wine"

Words and Music by
Brooke Ligertwood

The musical score is written in G minor (one flat) and 4/4 time. It consists of 12 staves of music. The lyrics are: "In the crush - ing, in the press - ing You are mak - ing new wine. In the soil I now sur - ren - der, You are break - ing new ground. So, I yield to You and to Your care - ful hand. When I trust You I don't need to un - der - stand. Make me Your ves - sel, make me an of - fer - ing. Make me what - ev - er You want me to be. I came here with noth - ing, but all You have giv - en me. Je - sus, bring new wine out of me. In the crush - ing, in the press - ing You are mak - ing new wine. In the soil I now sur - ren - der. You are break - ing new ground. You are break - ing new ground. So,". The score includes various musical notations such as rests, beams, and slurs. A double bar line with repeat dots appears at the end of the 10th staff. The instruction "D.S. al Coda" is placed above the 11th staff.

In the crush - ing, in the press - ing You are mak - ing
new wine. In the soil I now sur - ren - der,
You are break - ing new ground. So, I yield to You and to Your care - ful
hand. When I trust You I don't need to un - der - stand.
Make me Your ves - sel, make me an of - fer - ing. Make me what - ev - er You
want me to be. I came here with noth - ing, but all You have giv - en me.
Je - sus, bring new wine out of me. In the crush - ing,
in the press - ing You are mak - ing new wine.
In the soil I now sur - ren - der. You are break - ing
new ground. You are break - ing new ground. So,

D.S. al Coda

out of me. Je - sus bring new wine out of me.

Je - sus bring new wine out of me. 'Cause where there is new wine there is new

pow - er. There is new free-dom and the king - dom is here. I lay down my

old flames to car - ry Your new fire to - day.

'Cause where there is (day.) So, make me Your ves-sel,

make me an of - fer - ing. Make me what - ev - er You want me to be. God, I

pow - er. There is new free-dom and the king - dom is here. I lay down my

old flames to car - ry Your new fire to - day.

'Cause where there is (day.) So, make me Your ves-sel,

make me an of - fer - ing. Make me what - ev - er You want me to be. God, I

came here with noth - ing but all You have giv - en me. Je - sus, bring new wine

out of me. ___ Je - sus, ___ bring new wine

out of me. _ Je - sus, _ bring new wine out of me. _

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SONG OF SIMEON:

Tune – “God Rest Ye Merry”

**Lord, let Your servant go in peace, Your Word has been fulfilled.
 My eyes have seen Your saving work which for the world You willed;
 The glory of Your Israel as Light for all revealed.
 Oh tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy.
 Oh tidings of comfort and joy!**

**Oh, praise to God the Father and praise to God the Son
 And praise to God the Spirit, most blessed Three in One
 As 'twas, is now, and e'er shall be while endless ages run
 Oh tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy.
 Oh tidings of comfort and joy!**

POST COMMUNION PRAYER: Give to us, O Father, that what we have received with our lips, the Body and Blood of Your Son, we may faithfully keep with our hearts, and that through this Sacramental gift given to us in this present life we may hereafter receive life forever with You; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

BENEDICTION:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord upon you with favour, + and give you peace. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN:

“As With Gladness”

LSB # 397 VS 1, 4 & 5

**As with gladness, men of old did the guiding star behold;
 As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright;
 So, most gracious Lord, may we evermore be led to Thee.**

**Holy Jesus, ev'ry day keep us in the narrow way;
 And, when earthly things are past, bring our ransomed souls at last,
 where they need no star to guide, where no clouds Thy Glory hide.**

**In the Heavn'ly country bright, need they no created light;
 Thou its light, its joy, its crown, Thou its sun which goes not down.
 There forever may we sing, alleluias to our King.**

Words: William Dix, 1837-1898; Music: DIX, public domain.

REV. TODD HOEFFS

Epiphany & Baptism of Jesus

Scripture: Matthew 2 & 3

Title: "From Presents to Presence"

January 8, 2023

A little kid is asked: "What gift could you give to God?" Thinking for a moment, the little kid said: "Gift cards"?! "Cuz what else do you give the guy who has everything?!" Precious.

God's present to the world receives presents. Gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Precious gold honouring Jesus' Kingship. Frankincense honouring Jesus' priestly and prophetic calling. Myrrh, as a strong reminder of death and burial. Presents from foreigners' hands.

Camel riders from the Far East cover the plains of Israel. When the Magi arrive, they fall down and worship toddler Jesus. Star chasers follow the Light shining for all people to see.

The newborn King of Israel doesn't look impressive. There is no halo shining around His head.

He looks no different than any other citizen of Israel. Yet through God's presence, eyes are opened to see Jesus for Who He is, The answer to the world's woes. Entering into our disordered world quietly, when all the world was occupied with the busyness of life. He grows up in the obscurity of Nazareth, the carpenter's son, learning His dad's trade, working our work day with all its frustrations and uncertainties. For thirty years the world will have no real idea He's there.

Now He stands in the Jordan River water to do what no one else can do, to drown sin, to open heaven to earth, and bring in a new creation. Jesus comes fifteen miles from his home in Galilee—where he's grown up—to be baptized by cousin John, who bows to His greatness, acknowledging his own unworthiness. Jesus is here to help the helpless and love the unlovable.

Baptism kicks off his mission to the cross. Now, to those watching everyone get washed—to those standing in line waiting—what they see up ahead of them is just people going into the water and coming out. John tells them it's a baptism of repentance, so they line up and get baptized. In and out of the water. And it's Jesus' turn. John has been on the shore preaching the arrival of God's Kingdom and the need for Israel to repent and be washed in baptism.

At this time, only unbelieving converts to Judaism are baptized. And so it's astonishing, it's scandalous – John is saying Israel all wrong and must actively believe in and worship the One true God of Israel! Israel's been acting more like *Babylon, Assyria, or Egypt*.

The people are passing through their own Red Sea rescue with this washing -- to see the Promised Land—where the Saviour waits for them. Israel and her religion of refusing to follow must leave their evil ways and trust in the promise. John's washing clearly proclaims the ancient exodus—Leaving behind what harms them and running toward freedom.

No more slavery to sin. Life in Christ is perfect emancipation. By Jesus being there, He is deeply identifying with them. Jesus is God, Who left heaven, divinity united to his humanity/ And what do we know about him? Well, He's perfect. He's humble. He's on our side.

He doesn't arrive confessing any sins, for He has none to share! When He's baptized, He splashes right into the murky dirty water of sin. Like a sponge, He takes it all into Himself, all the world's mess, as HIS OWN. He takes our sin and its chaos and disorder into Himself – Only to be wiped out, squeezed out, poured out to death in our place. He will be sacrificed for the sin of the world; for your sin and mine. Jesus insisted, yes demanded, that He be baptized alongside the prostitutes and tax collectors and all the rejected sinners who had come to John to wash away their sins.

This is how righteousness is fulfilled. This is how the Law of God is satisfied. The Son becomes the Sinner. You become God's child. He's anticipating the Cross, the acceptance of the end of His life and the beginning of yours. That mission begins here. And we're all drawn in His baptismal waves. The Kingdom of Heaven, the advent of divine change is here. John preaches it.

Jesus identifies with it and sanctions it as good. Jesus submits willingly and humbly.

Jesus identifies with John's message and John's people. His baptism affirms John's ministry.

It shows that his message was true, his ministry was true, and it will link Jesus, the Messiah, with His ministry, and be the completeness of all the old testament years. Baptizing Jesus makes John uncomfortable. Doesn't fit into his own expectations. What about the ax, the winnowing fork, the unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:10-12)? The order and structure of John's world is being turned upside down. Jesus is the "more powerful" one and John is "not worthy to carry his sandals" (Matthew 3:11). Jesus is supposed to increase and John decrease (John 3:30).

We've all be there. We know what that's like. What do you do when your prayer is not answered, the budget doesn't work out, expectations are not met? What do you do when your plan doesn't come together, a relationship ends, or life is interrupted? What do you do when it's a hard day and you just want to say no and run away? Not only does Jesus demand this of John, He consents to it! Not consenting by giving up, It's about a way of life. It's about Jesus' way of life.

It doesn't mean we have to like or want what is happening. It does, however, mean that we face it and deal with it with grace and faith. The Spirit ensures we consent to God's will by trusting in His promises. Our baptism, like Jesus' baptism, leads to a death – Yet in our case, the death of the nasty old sinner in us that vies for 1st place in our lives. That gets crucified with Christ and buried with Him through Baptism. The darkness, the Sin, the Death are all drowned in Jesus' death and buried in His tomb. We are new creations from the hands of our Creator, Whom Heaven and nature sang and we as wise men still seek Him, gratefully treasuring His holy presence.

On those Jordan's banks, as on Calvary's hill, Jesus takes His stand and stakes everything on us! Guaranteeing us a place with God forever. That is VERY Good News! That proves what lengths out God will go—no matter how humiliating—no matter how devastating – in order to save us from our sins. He would do anything and everything to make sure that we can enjoy a relationship with him here in time and forever in heaven. He'll go under the water for you. He'll go into heat and nails and whips and hell for you. To the bowels of death...to take you to the heights of Heaven with Him, since He lives and rules over all things. Jesus consents to this. In Him we consent.

We consent in life now, By showing up and being present to whatever is before us and whatever is coming to us, even if it's difficult, painful, or the last thing we wanted. Consent isn't about being in control or having all the answers. It means we don't turn back or run away from what is in front of us. Consent means actively giving ourselves to the circumstances, relationships, and people before us. It's an act of risk and vulnerability. And it's a profession of faith, hope, and love.

It means staying open and remaining receptive to whatever in that moment is being asked of us in the name of God. Every time we consent we wade into the deep waters of life. We stand with Jesus in the river of humanity and together we fulfill all righteousness – nothing gets left undone and no one gets left out. Fulfilling. Completing. Jesus is getting the job done to the maximum.

Fulfill in Matthew's Greek text [Pleroo] comes from ancient classical education.

When a child is playing with a toy Gives it undivided attention -- Or learning a new skill

He keeps at it Mastering it over and over Until it is finished. Jesus consents to His saving mission until it is finished. It IS finished on the cross. God is well pleased. So Jesus keeps coming to you in many different ways so you believe and receive his presence --- His forgiveness, His Baptism, His Gospel, His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. The child in the manger, the toddler sitting among gold, frankincense and myrrh, the adult wet from Jordan baptismal water, gives you a new path to walk, a new outlook on life and His own life pulsing through yours. It's the way of forgiveness, not only receiving it but giving it, of being totally embraced by God. And still, wise men and women keep seeking and looking for hope. Reminds me of an experience with a nursing home shut-in visit. As I sat down next to my member, I opened up my bible and starting setting up the Communion ware. Poured the wine, set out the wafers. Read Scripture. Prayed Lord's Prayer.

As this took place, many of the staff and nurses continued moving around chatting. Noticeably one Muslim nurse and a Sikh male aid stopped and stood silent, watching – as I consecrated the elements for Holy Communion, THIS IS MY BODY/BLOOD – those 2 watched, remaining silent, visibly displaying reverence.....yes, let us hope wise men and women still seek Him.

And through our presence they will see Christs loving presence in us. Amen.