

Open Your Treasure

*"And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him:
gold, frankincense, and myrrh."*

Matthew 2:11

A Sermon by Rev. Derek Elphick

Today, I invite you to do two things:

First, I invite you to consider those things in your life that you "treasure," that are close to your heart...

And second, I invite you to "open" those treasures as you would a gift, open them so that they can be...

seen by you (and shared with others),
appreciated and valued,
talked about,
and presented to the Lord as an expression of gratitude.

This invitation is based on the Scriptural image we're given of the wise men opening their treasures to reveal the special gifts they had selected for the newborn King.

We can picture them pulling out, perhaps from amongst other treasures, the carefully selected gifts they had chosen to present to the Lord.

Like the wisemen, we too have many treasures.

Of course, I'm not talking about material, physical "treasures" like a home, or jewelry, or a car, or boat or other high-value assets.

I'm talking about something much deeper and more profound.

I'm talking about the things we've come to "treasure," that money cannot buy.

I'm talking about the "treasures" we'll be taking with us to the other side like...

- the relationships we've cultivated with family, friends and loved ones
- the relationships we've cultivated in loving and serving our neighbor, our local community, and country
- the relationships we've cultivated with the organizations, institutions and uses we care deeply about
- and ultimately the relationship we've cultivated with the Lord, His Word, and the church...

Now, we don't *acquire* these "treasures" overnight...

We've been accepting the Lord's invitation to "*lay up treasures in heaven*" for a very long time, a lifetime, in fact...

and this storing up of treasures, of the things we truly value, often happens without our awareness.

So, let's explore this invitation a little deeper.

We all have things we treasure, that are close to our heart.

This process of "collecting" treasures is based on our *loves* - for as the Lord teaches, "*where **your treasure is, there your heart will be also***" (Mt. 6:21).

Think of the rich variety of things we come to treasure in life:

Nature, pets, good food, arts and crafts, friendship, cooking, acts of kindness, making people smile, reading, sports, adventure, travel, music, writing, movies, family, hobbies, work, marriage, laughter, photography, technology, gardening, hiking, helping others, building and fixing things, exercise, meditation, prayer, reading the Word.

We have so many interests, so many loves - and those things we *really* care about, those things we put a *lot* of time and energy into - these become our "treasures" in heaven.

Of course, most of us also spend time (too much time, if we're honest) on the fool's errand of attempting to lay up "*treasures on earth...*" which, the Lord warns, will be destroyed by "moth" and "rust" since these are fleeting and temporary.

The pursuit of earthly treasures involves short-sighted, quick-fix goals and pleasures, ones we think will bring us peace and happiness but which, in reality, only serve self.

And we know, often from bitter experience, that putting our own wants and needs above others almost always ends up...

leading to a dead-end,
to an unhappy conclusion.

This brings us to a very different kind of "treasure," the treasure which the wise men brought before their newborn King,

...treasures which, once opened, open our eyes to a whole new reality, a whole new *dimension* to life in this world.

This explains why the wise men "*rejoiced with exceedingly great joy*" when they discovered where the young Child was.

They couldn't wait to open their treasures!

Yes, the gold, frankincense and myrrh had high, intrinsic value, but that's *not* what excited them!

What *excited* them was what these gifts represented.

In our reading today we read that:

"The reason why wise men from the east offered these gifts was that among some in the east there remained from ancient times the knowledge and wisdom of the people of old, which consisted in their understanding and seeing heavenly and Divine realities within things in the world and on earth. This was how they knew that gold, frankincense, and myrrh had these special meanings. They also knew from their prophecies, which were those of the Ancient Church, that the Lord would come into the world at which time a star would appear to them"
(AC 9293:3).

Unlike the other witnesses to the birth of the Lord on earth, the wise men were the most *prepared*,

the most prepared because they had access to the wisdom of the Ancient Church,

access to the knowledge of correspondences which unlocks the spiritual treasures we're talking about today!

As a result, they could absorb the significance of that holy event in ways the others couldn't,

not Zacharias or Elizabeth,
not Mary or Joseph,
not the shepherds,
not Simeon or Anna.

In opening their treasures, they were making a profound statement, a profound *confession* about this newborn King.

In presenting the **gold**, they were saying, *"Lord, you are the source of all the love, joy and happiness in my life."*

In presenting the **frankincense**, they were saying, *"Lord, you are the source of all the truth, wisdom and knowledge in my life."*

In presenting the **myrrh**, they were saying, "*Lord, you are the source of all the useful endeavors in my life.*"

We know that the real joy in life is in the giving, not the receiving.

This is true of gift-giving because, as we read in one of our lessons today, "**gifts captivate the mind and unify**" (AE 661).

Finding the perfect gift for someone we know and care deeply about is the reward itself!

"To feel the joy of another as joy in oneself, that is loving" (DLW 47).

Again, this is why the wise men felt such **joy and pleasure** in presenting their gifts to the newborn King.

They had access to ancient wisdom, ancient knowledge, what we could call "treasures in heaven,"

...which transform our world from black and white into color!

These treasures put our earthly life into its proper context, into its proper order.

Opening these treasures makes us realize that there are
so many truths,
so many realities,
that are higher, bigger than us...

When the wise men presented those gifts, they were saying:

"Lord, you give my life *purpose*" (gold).

"Lord, you give my life *meaning*" (frankincense).

"Lord, you give my life *direction*" (myrrh).

Because, at the end of the day, everybody needs:

Someone to love (gold - purpose)
Something to think about (frankincense - meaning)
Something to do (myrrh - direction)

I began this sermon by inviting you to do two things:

to consider those things in your life that you've come to treasure very much...

and to then, in your mind, "open" those treasures as you would a gift so that they can be **seen** and **valued** and **shared with the Lord and others**.

So let's do that.

The teachings of our church list a number of "spiritual treasures" that we've been gifted with, that are at our disposal anytime we wish to open them.

Here are a few:

1. The gift of the Lord's salvation.
2. The gift of being able to love others more than oneself (AC 1594).
3. The gift of spiritual knowledge and truth (AC 5649).
4. The gift of spiritual freedom.
5. The gift of innocence and peace (AC 1738).
6. The gift of eternal happiness (AC 9256:4).
7. The gift of a new will and new understanding (AC 9274).

All of these spiritual treasures unlock a potential we didn't know we had.

**As a result, the wisest thing we can do is go in search of our Lord,
 so that we may open our treasures,
 so that we may present to our newborn King,
 our gifts of gratitude.**

Today, that search must go in the direction of the Word itself - the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the teachings of the New Church - because, as one teaching says,

"We are blind to anything that has to do with heaven and God - we have to learn about these from revelation" (HD 177).

So let us take the journey of the wise men.

The Lord has filled our lives with treasures, waiting to be opened:

the gift of salvation
 the gift of starting over again
 the gift of new opportunities
 the gift of a new perspective
 the gift of forgiveness

And when you feel that you've lost your way, **open your treasure.**

Take the time to recall all the wonderful treasures you've stored up in heaven over the years,

- your friendships
- your cherished habits and routines
- your daily rituals
- your commitments and responsibilities
- your dedication to uses you feel called to...

This is how we show our *gratitude* to the Lord, by opening our treasure.

*"And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him:
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AMEN.