

# Sermon for Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2014

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

Ephesians 3:1-12

**Matthew 2:1-12**



In this morning's Gospel we hear about some wise men coming from the East to bring gifts to the baby Jesus. Christmas cards suggest that there were three wise men and they rode camels, but Matthew's Gospel simply tells us they were wise, and they came from the East. They were not Jewish and the countries to the East of Jerusalem we now call Iraq and Iran. They followed a star because they thought it would bring them to a leader who would be great, and they brought gifts of gold, incense and myrrh.

On this first Sunday of a new year I would like to suggest that we are a bit like those wise men from long ago because we are on a journey. Of course we do not follow a star, we follow Jesus, but we each have gifts and we give them to Jesus in different ways. When we look back on our lives we can also see the many ways that God has given us gifts in our journey. I'd like to share with you one way I have experienced this.

When I was twenty seven years old my first wife left me and took with her our twin boys, James and Philip, who were just eight months old. For twenty three years I was not allowed to see the boys for they lived in another part of the Province. In that time I married my second wife, Beverly, and we had a baby girl called Clare. We lived and worked in the remote Parishes of Nindewari and Wanigela before going to Saga which is near Kokoda: a place that is well known to many Australians because of the Second World War.

Three years ago at Saga a young man walked up to the house and we invited him to join us for a cup of tea. Thinking he was a stranger, I asked if he needed my help. He asked to speak privately with me and when we were alone he said, 'Dad it's me, Philip! My mother took me when I was just a baby and left you. I have come back because the man mum got married to will not accept us in the family. I was told by mum about you, so I came searching for you... and here I am!'

What a surprise to see my son come back home! I hugged him and I cried. After talking to Philip, I knew there was going to be a problem because I had not told Beverly about the boys! I invited Philip to spend the night with us and that night I

shared the news with Beverly. Not surprisingly Beverly was shocked to know that I had two boys from my first wife. She took some time to think it over but finally, she made up her mind to accept the boys into the family.

Beverly could have got mad with me and rejected the boys but she was wise and recognised them as a gift from God. You see Beverly and I only have a daughter and for Papua New Guineans, boys are very important because they are the ones who take care of their parents when they are old. So Philip and James are a real gift to Beverly and myself because we know they will take care of us in the future. They are also a gift to Clare because she now has two big brothers to look after her.

As you look back at your life I wonder what gifts God has blessed you with. Surely the gifts include children, grand-children and people to share love with. Out of gratitude for those gifts I wonder what gifts you have in return offered to God. How have you cared for the hungry and lonely? How have you given your time and your money to build up and strengthen the church?

As we look forward to the journey of 2014 may we each be inspired by the wise men to travel and share generously our gifts. I believe that each person here has gifts that can be used to build up the church, and I encourage you to share them.

Let us pray...

Loving God, we thank you for the gifts you have blessed us with in our life's journey and for the opportunities you give us to bless others. We offer you the coming journey of 2014 and ask you to help us be faithful, generous and wise. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen