January 5th – Wednesday – 12th Day of Christmas

Centering Breath Prayer: Child of light…accept my gifts.

Opening Prayer:

Holy child of God, thank you for bringing me here to this place at this time. Like Mary, I am storing up treasures in my heart. Be with me once again and instruct me in this special time together. Fill my heart with your special love as I pray in your precious name. Amen.

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

Key Verses: Matthew 2:9-11: ***"Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same start they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time! They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts; gold, frankincense, myrrh"*** **(The Message).**

"They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time!" The Magi had followed the star from the east and spent months on the road. They might have wished for a place to freshen up first, but they could hardly contain themselves! They couldn't wait another minute to worship the Christ Child, born to be king! And, they were Gentiles! For the first time, Gentiles responded to Christ, yet, he was still a little child. The Magi were "wise men." They studied the writings of all the people who kept written records. So, they knew the prophecies concerning the Messiah, even though they were not Jews. They were also students of the stars. The knew the importance of the star they followed to Jesus. It is the eve of Epiphany, sometimes called "Twelfth Night." In many countries, this was the main celebration for Christmas. This was the day in which gifts were exchanged and major parties were held. We may no longer celebrate "Twelfth Night" of the Twelve Days of Christmas as in the "olden days," but….

We are in the right place! We have arrived at the right time! Jesus is here! We have followed the signs, studied the Word and struggled to understand God's message, but, we made it! We have come to our time of response. We have been receiving with both hands and now it is time to give. Are we, like the Magi, having trouble containing ourselves? Are we overcome with joy at finding the Christ Child? Are we kneeling at his feet in worship? And, where are our gifts for the Christ Child? We had gifts for the children, for our spouse, for the boss, the hairdresser, the teachers, the neighbors, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters, secret pals and just about anyone else we could think of! But, what have we given to the Christ Child? What kind of gift would be appropriate for the Christ Child, anyway?

Mary instinctively knew something her son would teach later, *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Matthew 6:21 NIV). Mary treasured her memories and kept them in her heart (Luke 2:19, 51). Although we are not told she

treasured the memories of the visit of the Magi, it is probable that she did. Perhaps these memories, along with others she would have as Jesus grows and matures, were key to her survival during Jesus' crucifixion. Treasures, indeed! The Magi brought gold, frankincense and myrrh, rare and costly gifts for Jesus' future. We don't know what happened to these gifts, but, perhaps, they sustained Mary, Joseph and Jesus in Egypt. At any rate, the question we are exploring is: What is an appropriate gift for us to give Jesus? Jesus gave everything that he was and had for us. Can we do anything less for him? 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 tells of the generosity of the Macedonian churches in truly selfless giving. *"And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will"* (2 Corinthians 8:5 NIV). This verse is the inspiration for a Christmas carol from the 1980s called "What Can I Give Him?" The answer to the title question is to "give him my heart." I think the key to our response to an appropriate gift for the Christ Child is to give him what we have. Our acceptance of Jesus as the Christ is not complete until we give something in return. We can give the Christ Child our trust, obedience, faith, prayer and most of all our love such as we have learned on our journey of love. Even though God has given more love than we can ever repay, we can give what we have.

The Christmas season is over and we stand at the eve of Epiphany. Where do we go from here? What can we take from our Christmas celebration this year? If nothing else, I would hope we have observed God's love as we have traveled together on the journey of love and determined to return that love with actions that show our love. Christ is born! Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Additional Scriptures: Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 2:16-20, 41-52; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7

Questions for reflection and/or journaling:

1. What memories do I treasure in my heart?
2. What gifts of myself do I have for Jesus?
3. How can I put my love for the Christ Child into action today?

Suggestions for action:

1. Phrase for your tree: **ACCEPT MY GIFTS.**
2. List some of your treasured memories that could sustain you in times of despair. Keep the list where you can find it to remind you when you need it.
3. List some of the things you can give to the Lord.
4. Do something special today for someone as a gift to the Lord.

Closing Prayer:

Holy Child, bringer of life, it is both a relief and a sadness that the Christmas season is over. You have given me so much in the last few weeds we have spent together. Help me to know how and where to give in return. Like the Magi, I, too would hurry to give you praise and worship. Keep that excitement alive in me this day. In the name of Jesus, Savior of all, I pray. Amen