

Sermon for Christ & Grace Church Petersburg, VA
Christmas Day, December 25, 2016
The Rev. Bill Queen
“Our Gift to Jesus on his Birthday”

- since we'll be having a blessing of the gifts later in this service, I've been thinking a lot about gifts; and more specifically, since Christmas is a birthday celebration, I've been thinking about birthday gifts

- imagine a birthday party for an 18 year old; an appropriate gift from parents might be something practical, such as a laptop computer that the young person would need to take with them when they go to college; but what would you think if, instead, this young person's parents were so nostalgic about their child's birth, that they give him or her a rattle, a cuddly blanket, or little booties?; you might rightly question the sanity of those parents, seeing that they are so stuck in the past that they are completely out of touch with reality—especially out of touch with the reality of who their son or daughter has grown up to be

- as odd as this hypothetical example might sound, I'm not sure that it's all that different from how we might act and think about this birthday celebration that is Christmas; Christmas cards, Christmas carols, and our Christmas imagery in general is stuck in the past with the baby Jesus in the manger; so is our own thinking about Jesus out of touch with the reality of who Jesus grew up to be?; it's not a bad thing to adore the little baby Jesus; but it's not a good thing to get stuck there

- notice that the three Wise Men didn't have this problem; you recall that they didn't bring Jesus baby gifts: a mobile to hang above the manger, a binky, or nappies; they brought him gold—fit for a king; they brought him frankincense—fit for God; they brought him myrrh—fit for one who will suffer; all of these gifts were for the adult that Jesus would grow up to be; and the Wise Men showed an amazing awareness of exactly who Jesus would become, in the fullness of his life and death; I guess that's why we call them Wise Men

- so how might we follow their lead?; what gifts might we properly offer to the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, our Savior and Redeemer?; his greatest gift to us has been a relationship with us that leads to an abundant and joyful life now, and to an eternal life in his presence forever; so maybe the only gift from us that makes any sense is to live out that gift of a relationship to its fullest; to live out that relationship by leading our lives in a way that follows his teachings and his example: by loving God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind;

by loving our neighbor as ourselves; and by loving one another as Christ has loved us; on this Christmas Day, let us not forget to give the most important and the most appropriate gifts we can, to the one who is God's greatest gift to us