

SHEPHERDS

Are you
among the shepherds,
watching on the hillside?

Do you sense the sudden stillness
stiffening the air,
and feel about you all life grow taut
with unaccountable expectancy?

Do you notice
how the sheep stop their snuffling,
your companions their murmuring,
moon stops swinging in and out of clouds,
night insects hover on the air?

Does the sense
of some Immanence
draw you all together
in silent comradeship, an awareness
of some Presence?

Is your mind
singing with excitement,
racing to overtake itself, or
is it paralyzed and dumb with fear?

Watch the sky, Shepherds,
for the earth is asleep.
Watch the sky.
See how the moon has vanished
and the clouds split clear.

See the light! Listen!
A shepherd needs good ears.
No, don't laugh at yourself,
You can hear what you hear.
And don't cover your eyes,
You can see what is there.

This is the consummation of your life-work.
You have watched and listened.
You have cared for that which needed care,
waiting prepared
to ward off any danger.

This is your reward.
So shall the shepherds of the world, for all
time to come, be those chosen first to see the
Christ.

Three Wise Men Historical Puzzle: Relics at Cologne

Biblically we know very little about the Wise Men who came from the East bearing gifts to the Christ Child and, having adorned Him as the King of the Jews, returned to their own country.

It is generally accepted that there were three Wise Men because of the three specifically mentioned gifts: church tradition has identified these as Melchior, Caspar, and Balthasar; Melchior, king of Arabia, brought a casket of gold; Caspar, king of Tarsus, brought myrrh; and Balthasar, king of Ethiopia, brought frankincense. These gifts are considered symbolic of what Jesus was to become—gold for a king, frankincense for a high priest, and myrrh for a great physician. Collectively, the Wise Men received the gifts of charity and spiritual wealth, perfect faith, truth and meekness.

When they returned to their own country, the three Kings reputedly sold their possessions and went about preaching the Christ-King. Legend continues, that they were martyred in India for their faith.

The bodies of the Wise Men, transferred to Constantinople in the fourth century—by the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine—were enshrined at Milan for a while after the first Crusade. Frederick Barbarossa authorized removal of the relics to Cologne where they remain to this day deposited within the magnificent Cathedral of Cologne.

MESSAGE OF THE BELLS

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
The old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet,
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head,
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep;
"God is not dead, nor both He sleep;
The wrong shall fail,
The right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

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