

## Eternal Gifts

Beneath a beckoning Bethlehem star, a creaking stable shifts quietly in the night wind.  
Shepherds stand silently in homage as the breathing of cows and sheep create  
A mist around a manger that yesterday served as their feed trough.  
In the center of the bright night, a baby cries softly as He is humbly welcomed into a waiting world.  
His mother's eyes gaze down at Him lovingly, knowing that this gentle voice  
Will soon call out loudly, teaching others to give, to love, and to serve.  
In the distance three wise men wander in the night, drawn to this Child of mystery.  
Their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh will soon lie at His feet...

In a tiny village in South Africa, the dead outnumber the living.  
The terrible plight of a deadly disease overtakes a continent as  
The plague of AIDS leaves no family untouched.  
Despite this desperation and despair, the political woes of fear, oppression, and hate  
Still pervade throughout this land, much more deadly than a virus.  
In the shadows of death, a young man hears their cries and leaves the security of his family to teach.  
With each person that he touches and with each step that he takes on his journey, he walks closer to Him.  
His gift of love and hope sparkles in the darkness. His is the gift of gold...

In a frigid midwestern town, a young girl and her mother explore yet another store.  
A child growing up too swiftly, she clenches her tiny purse stuffed with change and bills earned.  
Amidst a mountain of choices, she calculates every cent and confidently decides on her first independent purchase.  
Across the aisle, an elderly man in tattered clothing visits his only store tightening his fist around his meager money.  
As he releases his tense grip and tentatively counts his insufficient savings, he shakes his head in frustration.  
His disappointment is interrupted by a tug on his fraying coat, the wrinkled rivers of sadness on his brow  
Disappear as the little girl points out crumpled money she had placed on the floor and convinces him it is his.  
Her gift, this offering of compassion and understanding soothes the soul. Hers is the gift of frankincense...

In the affluent suburbs of the city, uncertain, eager young boys enter to learn.  
Drawn to the pursuit of excellence in education, they come in search of the best.  
Initially deaf to all, too busy to hear, they are entangled in their own selfish interests.  
Introductions of reflection slowly lead to a deeper understanding of what is truly significant.  
Selfishness becomes selflessness as boys become men who slowly begin to hear His voice calling.  
A pristine, white cafeteria becomes a colorful North Pole as toys are collected for the needy.  
Young men follow in His path as the poor are served in Salinas, homes are built in Mexico,  
And boys who once entered to learn now leave to serve. Their service is the gift of myrrh...

He was born in a stable, welcomed by shepherds and warmed by the breath of their flocks.  
From this humble beginning He gave us the truth, leading the way,  
Teaching what is right, calling us to love and to honor.  
His voice still summons us to live our lives with compassion,  
To love and respect all people, to live with a warm heart,  
To understand that in each selfless act we walk closer and closer to Him.  
Two thousand years later, we are still called to hear His message...  
"Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, that you do unto me."