



*"We three kings of orient are bearing gifts we traverse afar. Field and fountain, moor and mountain following yonder star." By John Henry Hopkins Jr.*

In January 2018, I participated in a seminary class in Cuernavaca, Mexico. It was three weeks of intensive education in the faith and worship of Spanish speaking Christians. We arrived just in time for the biggest celebration of the Christmas season, Three Kings Day. Throughout the Spanish speaking world (i.e. lands colonized by Catholic Spain), Three Kings Day is the most important day of the Christmas season. It is, after all, the day we commemorate baby Jesus receiving the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

In Mexico, children go to bed on Jan. 5 expecting the three kings to set gifts around the nativity scene for the children living in the home. In addition to the presents around the manger, family and friends gather for parties centered around the Rosca De Reyes (King Cake). This is a bread decorated with fruit and icing served with hot chocolate. Somewhere hiding in the cake is a small plastic baby Jesus. Whoever, finds Jesus in their piece of cake is then obligated to provide tamales and other food for another celebration on Feb. 2, Candlemas.

In the church, we refer to Jan. 6 as Epiphany. For us, it marks the end of the Christmas season, but many throughout the USA stop celebrating much sooner. For retailers, Christmas begins as early as October and by the second day of Christmas, they are already marking things down for clearance and prepping for Valentine's Day. A few things hang on until New Year's Day, but after that, we are back to work and school. "The Holidays" are over for most of us before the Christmas season finishes.

I'm not sure Jesus is concerned about how or when we celebrate. I don't think God cares if we get a tree or stocking with presents. God probably isn't concerned about how many cookies we bake or the dishes we prepare for Christmas dinner. I doubt that God even minds that some people don't show up for worship on the day we commemorate Christ's birth.

That said, I do think God takes delight in our worship and praise. I believe that God wants us to take time (whenever that may be) to really reflect on the fact that God loves us so much that God became a human to be with us. If you weren't able to take the time to do that during Advent or even on Christmas eve or day, it is never too late. You can celebrate *real* Christmas, the birth of Jesus, any day of the year.

Epiphany marks the end of the Christmas season, because the *Magi* were the last to arrive to see the Child Savior. They brought him gifts and bowed in adoration. Maybe Christmas has become too busy and too loud for us to do it properly, but we can use Epiphany to catch up. We can take time in January to give gifts and adoration to the One Who really matters.

For more information on

**Three Kings Day:** <https://guideposts.org/positive-living/entertainment/travel/how-three-kings-day-is-celebrated-around-the-world/>

**Epiphany and Candlemas:** <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Candlemas>