

Celebrating Christmas

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[0 : 00] Thank you ladies and gentlemen for Bibles. I want you to turn to Luke chapter 2. Luke chapter 2, I hope you're having a blessed Christmas. I was going to say because of the inconvenience of all the things that happen on Christmas morning and I understand all of that to come as you are, come comfortable.

But I went to Walmart and decided I wasn't going to encourage people to just come as they were. So, because I've seen them as they is.

I hope it's a blessed Christmas and I thank you for putting Christ at the center of it. He deserves it and we're better off for it.

And I think it says something about your priorities and I appreciate that and admire it. I don't believe you'd want to be here without hearing the Christmas story.

It just makes sense to me. Luke chapter 2, beginning in verse 1. It says, In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

[1 : 17] This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria and all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea to the city of David which is called Bethlehem because he was of the house and lineage of David to be registered with Mary as betrothed who was with child.

And while they were there, this time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them. The glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with great fear.

And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For under you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you, you'll find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God and saying glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

[2 : 35] When the angels went away from them into heaven the shepherds said to one another let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us. And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger and when they saw it they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.

And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them.

My favorite parts of these words are close to the end of it when it talks about how to celebrate and how to respond to Christmas.

So briefly this morning I want to encourage you to respond and to celebrate in three ways. And if you don't get it then I won't be brief.

First is ponder. That's what verse 19 says Mary did. She pondered. I love that verse. She treasured all these things pondering them in her heart.

[3 : 58] Mary just let it soak in. Muse is a good word. Because muse means to sit back and to meditate and to think.

Amuse means to not muse. We like amusement parts because we don't have to think. We like amusement because we don't have to think. But there's times when we ought to think.

Now there's a lot of amusements this time of year. However, I believe it's important to pause in the midst of all that happens to muse as well.

And that's what Mary did. She took it in. It's one of my favorite Christmas verses because it's personal to me. Because I noticed something over the years of growing up and then having our own children when we went back to where I grew up to grandpa and grandma's house.

When all the gifts were around the tree they were all distributed out. People tearing into them. A couple of dogs usually in the mix somewhere.

[5 : 24] I would look and my mother would not be opening her gifts. Pile of gifts be around her and yet she's not opening them.

Mama opened one and she just kind of blow us off. Continue to watch. Take it in. I never quite understood that but I do now.

I do now. I do now. It's much more blessed to give than to receive. She's just watching. Watching responses and watching to see if just taking it in.

And she often says it was a red letter day and so she's just taking it in. And that's what Mary did. She just took it in.

Now, there's a lot going on these days. But I encourage you, don't get so caught up in all of it that you miss the pondering.

[6 : 33] That you miss the still moment. That you miss the mental gathering. Taking it in. These are blessed times.

Memory makers. So soak them in. Ponder. The second response I see them do is share.

It's in verse 17 and 18. And it says, when they saw it, when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. Notice the response of those shepherds that were told.

They were amazed. The people that they told were amazed. And if you think about the whole story, as if you've never heard it, it is amazing.

That God loved us enough to send his son. And when he sent his son to send him in a stable. To be raised by ordinary folk.

[7 : 38] To never hold an office. Jesus never traveled beyond 200 miles from his home. Yet to be perfect and to die for us, but then to rise from death on his own.

And then to go to heaven to work on our behalf while he empowers us to do what he's called us to do. And I love this. And he lives to make intercession for us.

He lives to pray for us. The gospel is amazing. Every time a lost one hears it. It could very well be amazing.

So share it. What's God done for you? Don't hold that in. You don't have to have a spiritual gift of proclamation or evangelism to be able to share what God has done for you.

We share about the things that we care about. We share about those things that mean so much to us. Let's share about the Lord.

[8 : 52] And then the last response is to praise. Verse 20 says, And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them.

When all the festivities are done, it'll be time to return. However, when you return back to some sense of normalcy, if there is even such a thing in today's world, return like these did.

Return glorifying and praising God. Years ago, Larno Harris sung a song about after Christmas putting the decorations up.

And he said his boy was helping him put the decorations in the attic. And his son asked him, Dad, do we store away Jesus too? And he responds with a chorus in that song, All year long.

We must worship day by day. All year long, tis the season to obey. May the Christmas tree lights and the sleigh ride of night remind us all to stay in God's presence all year long.

[10 : 17] My friend, that's what Christmas is about. Christmas is about re-energizing, re-engaging, re-steering our mind upon what really matters and not missing it.

Years ago, it is told that in a European country, there was a christening taking place of a child who had been born to royalty. And the guest arrived.

A servant met them at the door and took their wraps. And as they continued to gather for this christening, finally someone said, Where's the baby?

The nurse went to fetch the baby but couldn't find the baby. And finally, a guest recalled having seen the baby in the bed where the coats had been placed.

The parents were horrified to find their baby in that room too late smothered by a pile of coats.
[11:24] What an irony that the real purpose of the gathering had been forgotten and the one to be honored had been killed. I wonder if that isn't true for many of us at this time of year.

Jesus is the reason for the season. Jesus is our celebration. He is the honored one. He is our king. So this year let's honor him by wondering.

By by witnessing by waiting before him and worshipping him.

I think that would make not only for a blessed Christmas but a blessed new year as well. With every head bowed and every eye closed I want to ask you this morning greatest Christmas gift you've ever been given is Jesus Christ and the opportunity of salvation.

And so I want to ask you this morning has there ever been a time in your life when you've surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ? You've given up your life and given it to him. Asked him to forgive you and to cleanse you and to change you.

[12:52] Committed you to your life to live from this day forward for him. If that's never happened to you I want you to know there's an invitation open to you not only by me but by the Lord Jesus himself.

If you sense the need of that you didn't come up with that on your own it's God probing you he's working and moving in you he's speaking to you. No greater Christmas gift could come to you than the gift of eternal life through surrendering your life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And no greater gift could you give than yourself to Christ. What a way to celebrate Christmas.

Maybe you're here and God's speaking to you about making a private decision that you've made for the Lord public.

Like these that have come this morning to be baptized you know that you need to do that as well to honor the Lord. To be biblical about your salvation. God's leading you to do such as that.

I encourage you to come we'd love to guide you in that schedule that for you celebrate that with you. Maybe the Lord's leading you to this church. You feel like God's drawing you to be a member of this church and to worship with us and I encourage you if he does so you come just as good a morning as any.

[14:06] I encourage you to come. And maybe it's not those things. Maybe it's a private matter. Maybe the reality is that you've not been spending enough time pondering upon the Lord.

you've not spent enough time sharing the Lord with others. You've not spent enough time worshipping the Lord. And today you want to say Lord I want to give you my gift and that's me. I'm going to give you all of me. I want to start new with you oh God today. You can do that where you are. I'll be happy to pray for you. You can come to this altar. Whatever God leads you to do just be obedient.

You'll never be satisfied unless you're obediently following the Lord. So just do what he tells you to do. Nothing more and nothing less. Lord Jesus thank you for all that you give to us and all that you do for us.

And I just pray that you'll help us to be obedient this morning as you speak to us this Christmas morning. In Jesus precious name. Amen.