

## THE BIG IDEA: We carry the meaning of Christmas past the moment of Christmas

### The Take-Off

The world is divided into 2 types of people: those who start celebrating Christmas before Thanksgiving and those who stop celebrating Christmas before New Year's.

Shoot, how many of you in that last category had the tree down and the decorations boxed up the day after Christmas?

Let me make a few disclaimers here before we go any further: one, I'm in the first group and, two, this morning's message is not about making you feel like the second group is bad.

What I do want us to see is that the very first Christmas didn't end as quickly as we end Christmases now, and I believe that we can take away a lot of truth from the last 2 verses of what is commonly called the Christmas story in the Bible.

**Luke 2:1-20** contains the Biblical account of the birth of Jesus, and this morning we want to focus our time on **verses 19 and 20**.

We're going to see 2 groups - Mary and the shepherds - and if any people ever had a reason to experience "post-Christmas letdown" it was these two.

But I think that they both show us some things that we can do in order to keep the Christmas story alive all year long.

### 1. Mary made the connection

- a. For Mary, the birth of Jesus was just the beginning of the story, and I think we sometimes forget that.
- b. Jesus came for so much more than just a day.
- c. **[VIDEO / The Christmas Connection]**
- d. How did Mary make the connection between the birth of God's son and His death for us all?
- e. She did 2 very intentional things:
- f. FIRST, she "kept" or treasured "all these things"
  - The good things, the bad things, the hard things, the stranger things
  - She made sure that she didn't lose any of it
  - The Greek word for kept is the same one used in **Matthew 9:17** and **Luke 5:38** for preserving wine poured into new wine skins
  - What parts of this Christmas will you keep? Family, special gifts, candlelight service, etc.
  - We may pack up decorations and throw out the tree, but the most important parts must be kept, treasured, preserved, protected.
- g. SECOND, she "pondered" them in her heart
  - This is the part for all of you who love to channel your inner 2 year-old
  - Mary did a lot of asking in her heart: Why me? Why here? Why now? Why Him?
  - The Greek word for ponder means "to confer, converse, bring together in one's own mind"
  - It can even have the flavor of encountering in a hostile sense
  - Think about that. She had a bit of a war in her own mind and soul over what it all meant that only got resolved as she lived past that moment.
  - In other words, the meaning of the moment was revealed in the moments beyond the moment
  - Why? Time brings perspective and perspective brings clarity.
- h. Think about all the things that Mary would face after this moment: the wise men, Simeon in the temple saying he's seen the Messiah, raising the Son of God, losing the Son of God, watching Jesus grow in favor with God and man, seeing the rise and fall of His ministry, watching Him be misunderstood by the very people He came to save, watching her Son die
- i. Talk about a roller coaster ride - and in all these times I can hear her whispering to herself, "This is why he came."
- j. She would remember that the angels said "Glory to God in the highest" and realize that this is how God would be glorified.
- k. She would remember that the angels said, "Peace on earth to men" and realize that this is how her son would bring it.
- l. She kept and pondered, and in doing so, she made the connection: Christmas meant more, even if she couldn't quite understand how, because Jesus was more.

## 2. The shepherds lived in the same place differently

- a. I love the way **verse 20** is worded: “the shepherds returned”
- b. Isn't that pretty much the way the holiday season ends? We have lots of lights, glitter, dinners, parties, way too much food, we all feel something warmer than normal (some call it the “magic” of Christmas, but I say it's the meaning of Christmas!) only to suddenly see life return to normal.
- c. The shepherds returned to dark nights watching dumb sheep on dirty hillsides, and yet something had changed
- d. **THEY** had changed! They lived in the same place, but their lives were different
- e. They were marked by the **PRESENCE** of God and were constantly glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen
- f. They lived differently because they saw their lives as moments of worship
- g. Mary pondered.
- h. The shepherds worshiped.
- i. **All of them carried the meaning of Christmas past the moment of Christmas.**

### The Landing

**[VIDEO / Christmas really happened]**

Today, on the last day of 2017, will you make a decision to ponder, to keep, to worship and to **carry the meaning of Christmas past the moment of Christmas** and into 2018?

Let's pray.