

Christmas, The Next Day

Luke 2:20 (KJV)

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

One of my favorite things about the Christmas season is how so many people focus on Jesus Christ. Many don't, but others are...

People from far and wide celebrate Christmas.

There is lots of traveling going on. People who never attend church make it to services during the Christmas season!

Maybe that first Christmas was something like what we see!

They had the angels singing, so the air was filled with Christmas music. They had the shepherds visiting, kind of like local friends dropping by. And they had the Wise men coming in from out of town, they did not make it in time for Christmas, but they got there for the same reason!

Kind of like when we go to visit family in other cities, and we don't get there for Christmas, but we do show up around that time of year!

Let me point out to you an interesting little note!

Luke 2:20 records for us, that after the shepherds had visited the baby, **the shepherds returned!**

In fact, if you think about it, for most everybody, life got back to normal after that first Christmas day!

The shepherds returned to their flocks; the angels silenced their singing; the Wise Men made the long trip back home.

It seems like everybody forgot about that Holy Night! So much so, that we do not even know for sure what day Christ was really born!

The shepherds returned as did everybody else, **all except Mary and Joseph!**

When Christmas is over this year, will you and I simply return to life as normal, perhaps praising God for the chance to celebrate Christmas, but really, none different than you were before? Or will you, like Mary and Joseph have your lives radically changed by Christmas this year?

All of us who have had children know, the birth of a baby changes our lives forever, **but only the parents come away being totally changed from the birth!**

I wonder this morning, when we consider our visit with Jesus this Christmas, will we come away more like those who stop by a few minutes to see the baby, and then go on with life as normal? Or will we be more like those parents, whose lives are never again the same because of the birth?

Mary and Joseph never did return from seeing Jesus!

A. That Christmas night when they first saw Jesus, was for them only the beginning! From then on, every night, for the rest of their lives, they were with Jesus Christ!

B. They did have to leave Bethlehem, but they took Jesus with them! We know, for instance, that they moved from Bethlehem to Egypt. And they then moved from Egypt to Nazareth, but they never moved without taking Jesus with them!

C. There was one time, when they slipped up and left Christ behind in Jerusalem at the Temple, but as soon as they realized He was missing they immediately went to find Him!

This Christmas, millions, of people will come to worship and see Jesus, but the greatest majority will simply leave saying "That's nice!" and go on with life as usual. It will only be the few, who having seen Jesus Christ, determine never to leave His side again!

When we have to move or whatever, we make sure to get back into a local church, where we can keep Jesus with us!

When we do occasionally get sidetracked and misplace the Lord in our lives, make a beeline back to Him as soon as we figure it out!

For Joseph and Mary, Christmas was more than a once a year celebration, it was an everyday reality!

Mary and Joseph nurtured their relationship with Jesus Christ!

A. Raising Children is a growing experience! Anyone who has raised children knows the truthfulness of this. You grow up almost as much as the child does! For one thing, you hardly know the child that first day you bring them into the house! You have to get to know that child growing up in your home and the truth is, you never know them fully! As they grow up, they change, and so do you, so your relationship requires almost constant care to make sure you really know them!

B. You have to learn how to be a parent. So hopefully you are always improving in that area too! While the shepherds returned to their flocks, Mary and Joseph stayed there, responsible for the rest of their lives to nurture and develop their relationship with Jesus Christ! The same is true with our relationship with Jesus Christ. We get to know Him only a little the day we are first introduced to Him as our Savior! We are glad for the relationship, to know we are going to heaven, but we hardly know Jesus and we know almost nothing about how to live pleasing to him! Even after we have got it figured out a little bit, we never in this life obtain a place where we know everything we need to know about our relationship with Jesus Christ!

There are many Christians, who to tell you the truth, I can find no fault in, except for this one thing: they aren't growing anymore in Christ! They know a certain amount about Christ, they are happy with what they know, and they aren't interested in knowing anymore! Mary and Joseph spent not only Christmas, but the rest of their lives growing in their relationship with Jesus!

Mary kept all that Jesus said and was said about Jesus in her heart.

Luke 2:19 (KJV)

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

Luke 2:51 (KJV)

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

Can you see the significance here? The others just visited the baby, rejoiced and celebrated a while, and went back home. Mary and Joseph took all that was said and done both about Jesus and by Jesus, kept them, and pondered them in their hearts. They were changed forever by the words spoken by Jesus and the words spoken about Jesus!

Here we are this Christmas and I wonder what kind of crowd we all are? Are we like the shepherds, and the Wise men, who came to see Jesus, but then returned to their own lives? Or are we like Mary and Joseph, for whom Christmas was only the beginning of a radical new way of life, and thought! Who never left Jesus? Who nurtured their relationship with Jesus the Christ? And who kept all that was said by and about Jesus and pondered in their hearts?