

Christmas 2025 Series –Live A Merry Christmas! #5 – The “After Christmas” Story Luke 2:21-40

Well, Christmas 2025 is in the books! Etched in history. Just like the first Christmas.

As we look forward, **surprisingly, the weeks following Christmas** are some of the most difficult of the year for many people. There’s...

- **Cleaning up...**
- Facing and paying **the bills...**
- **Juggling** the stress, the exhaustion, the emotional roller coaster...
- **Adjusting** from the **constant hum of Christmas** jingles/joy **to “normal”** - To the **same old life** that was there before Christmas...
- **Getting back to** life- school, work, whatever...

If you google “*After Christmas Challenges*”, or something similar, you’ll find plenty.

- One article in Forbes called it the “**Post Christmas Blues**”.
- It’s a subject in **psychological journals**.
- **Stats** will reveal **more depression** this time of year, more **visits to the ER** and **mental health professionals...**

It is real, and it is a challenge.

As we prepare for the coming weeks, for a New Year – with Christmas fresh behind us -

- ***What impact*** *did it have?*
- ***What is different today*** ***because*** *of what we have seen and experienced?*
- ***Will we be more influenced and driven by the unknown influences coming our way, to which we are all susceptible, or will the power of those influences be overcome by the presence and power of our Savior?***

That’s what Christmas was all about, right? Not just an event, but an effect.

The story didn’t end in Bethlehem. **What we call “The Christmas Story” was not an end at all, it was a next step.** **Part of the wonder of the birth of Jesus is *what happened after!***

- The world would keep spinning pretty much as always, but ***their worlds changed. Life would not be the same.***
- **The problem isn’t that Christmas ends. It’s that we’re often unprepared for what God intends to do next.**

A truly Merry, Mighty Christmas sets the stage for what comes after.

Paul Harvey might say, **"And now, for the rest of the story"**

Our final session of Live A Merry Christmas is the rest of the story – **The "After Christmas" Story**

I. The "After Christmas" Story Of Mary and Joseph.

A. Introduction and preparation:

- They **faced their fears**
- They **altered their plans**
- They **accepted God's plan though they probably didn't understand (FAITH)**
- They **paid the price obedience required**
- They **journeyed to Bethlehem...**

B. Jesus was born!

- Mary and Joseph bore the responsibility and experienced the wonder of Jesus' birth.
- They hosted shepherds.
- They paid taxes and took care of a newborn.

But it had only begun.

C. The Journey to Jerusalem. Luke records

1. Day 8 (Probably still in Bethlehem): Jesus was circumcised and named

2. 40 days after his birth (Lk. 2:22), Mary & Joseph brought baby Jesus to Jerusalem to the temple.

The journey probably took them a day or so.

They then most likely spent only **a few hours**, but **so much happened!**

- **Mary** presented the **sacrifices for her purification**
- **The Presentation of Jesus,**
 - **The Dedication of the Firstborn:** *Consecrating the male firstborn to God*, as commanded in Exodus 13:12.
 - **Sacrifices:** **Offering two turtledoves or two young pigeons**, as prescribed for those **unable to afford a lamb** (indicating Mary and Joseph's humble circumstances).
- **The Encounters with Simeon and Anna**

3. **Then** – they journeyed into the unknown. They returned home, but nothing was familiar. The future was just that. Uncertain. Unknown.

- **They went home to Nazareth.** The distance was **about 65–70 miles.** While today that would be pretty simple, back then, it was **dangerous** as well as **demanding.** From what we know, **it probably took them close to a week to get to Nazareth,** depending on pace and route.

They didn't know, but **Nazareth was not a final destination.**

It was actually a **place of obscurity.** **A place they needed, however.** **A place where God would work to help and heal, to grow His Son, and to prepare them for what was to come.**

- If you happen to find yourself in a Nazareth this coming year, or maybe you're there now, and wonder "Why" – Just know, God is working FOR you and in you.
- **Once they reached their destination,** they moved into **a little house** as **a new family** and began the next season of life.
 - They would **take care of a newborn** and work to **provide for him and keep him safe**
 - They would **face not only the normal struggles** of a new family with a newborn, especially in those times, but **the added struggles Jesus brought.**
 - The gossip and rumors
 - The hatred and evil
 - Ignorance. Willful. Sometimes vicious ignorance.

"And they live happily ever after?"

Only in fairy tales. Life doesn't work that way does it?

The story is amazing, but it isn't tidy. And neither is life.

Matthew picks up the chronicle after Luke left off... Matthew 2:

D. Matthew 2:

- **Jesus is a young child, probably 1 ½ years- 2 years old, living in a house in Nazareth with Mary and Joseph.**
- **Then...**
 - **Wise men came and worshipped**
 - **An evil, deadly ruler tried to kill them**
 - **They had to leave it all and escape as refugees to Egypt...**

We could let **each of the characters** we feel we know so well after all these years tell us their “After Christmas Story”. **They each had one.**

- **The shepherds** were so transformed that everyone they met heard about Jesus.
- **Simeon and Anna:** Fulfilled and overflowing
- **The Magi:** Matthew records, “*they departed into their own country another way*”. (2:12) We can only imagine...

But, let’s focus on Mary and Joseph. We know their story a little better now. What do we learn?

II. “After Christmas” Truths From The Story Long Ago.

1. The birth of Jesus was not the end of the story. The incarnation was the beginning of a journey filled with unknown blessings and burdens...

For us, that journey doesn’t begin with the birth of baby Jesus in a manger; **It begins with what Jesus called the “new birth” – the birth of Christ in our hearts!**

2. God’s Plan For Each of Us, just as it did for them, requires commitment.

Not convenience. Not quid-quo-pro with the God of the Ages.
Commitment, even when obedience disrupts our plans.

3. To fully experience *God’s plan for us in Jesus, and the wonder that awaits, will require* surrendering our plans and will to Him.

We would not know the names and the stories if each one had not let go of their plans and will and accepted God’s.
It was true then; it still is.

4. We can’t know the paths down which God will lead us as we experience Jesus, and often, they will appear strange. Illogical. Even impossible.

Mary and Joseph couldn’t begin to understand. **They didn’t have to; they just had to believe. So will we.**

5. Experiencing Jesus, and living accordingly, will cost us.

It could be argued that *if those in the story hadn't been willing to do what was asked of them*, to "pay the price" required of them, **they would have missed it - missed Him!**

******We are blessed that we don't have to work and pay the price to know Him; He paid that price for all at the cross. We don't have to "do" anything *but receive by faith what He has DONE!***

However, **After** salvation and regeneration... Jesus made it clear that *if we are to be His disciples and follow Him, we must take up our cross and die daily.* This isn't a call to earn His love, but **a response to having already received it freely.**

It might seem harsh and demanding, but **Jesus was the perfect balance of grace and truth.** He told us difficult, even brutal truths, always driven by His perfect love and purpose. Always.

What about those who may have met Him, know Him and His will, and yet are unwilling to yield their lives to Him?

- **Can they really be saved?** Sure, if they've truly trusted him as Savior.
- **Can they be His child?** Absolutely, if they ever were born again by faith in Jesus into His family.

None of the people in our story were perfect. None were sinless. All needed a Savior and Lord. They chose to follow faithfully. God did the rest.

Mary and Joseph would be the first to tell us - Living God's plan and experiencing where it leads may be simple, but is not always easy. It will cost us.

6. Ask Mary and Joseph... Ask each one of those who encountered and experienced Jesus and walked away changed... *Was it worth it?*

The lesson spoken so clearly:

Knowing and serving Jesus- is worth – everything.

Christmas didn't end the story. It changed it. It still does. What happens next depends on what we do with Jesus now.