

MAKING CHRISTMAS LAST ALL YEAR

Selected Scripture

Introduction

Someone has said anyone who thinks Christmas doesn't last all year doesn't have a credit card. It is true that for many, the joy and the excitement of Christmas comes to a crashing end after the presents are opened, the turkey is eaten and the holiday is over. All that is left is the gloom of winter days, and the frustration of trying to pay the bills.

But for the Christian, for the one to whom Christmas means more than shopping and charge accounts, shouldn't the pure spirit of Christmas be more than just one day or one short season? The question is this: how can we make Christmas last all year?

That's what we want to think about today together. I have some very practical suggestions for you on how you can make Christmas more than a one-day event—how you can make it last all year long. These suggestions come from Woodrow Kroll of Back to the Bible, but really, they come directly out of God's Word.

Each of these four ways is found right there in Luke chapter two, the popular account of the birth of the baby in Bethlehem. Are you ready for them? Here are four ways to make Christmas last all year.

I. Keep the joy in your soul

Remember when the angel announced the birth of the baby Jesus to the shepherds? He said, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." That's Luke 2:10.

The angel's announcement to the shepherds was intended to bring joy to you and me. When you receive a birth announcement, isn't it a joyous occasion? It obviously is. But it's not the announcement which brings you joy. It's the birth itself. Joy comes from the baby born, not from the announcement made and if ever there was a baby born that would bring joy to us, surely it had to be the birth of the Lord Jesus. The joy of this baby in the Bethlehem manger is the core of Christmas.

You know, it seems that a lot of Christians today, along with many others, seem to be missing the joy of Christmas. That's why it can't last all year. It's because they've missed the joy. Robert Louis Stevenson once said, "To miss the joy is to miss all."

When they miss the joy, they miss everything. You can't take the announcement of that incredible night so many, many centuries ago, with you every day. But you can take the Saviour with you every day. And really, isn't that the point? Joy, true joy comes from knowing Jesus in a personal way. Not from celebrating His birth. Joy is not a Christmas thing, it's a daily thing.

Happiness may come momentarily from the Christmas presents that you receive but joy, lasting joy only comes from receiving God's Christmas present. That's His son, the Lord Jesus.

Psalms 16:11 says of God, "...in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." And Isaiah reminds us, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." (Isaiah 12:2-3 ESV) Again, the prophet Habakkuk agrees. He says, "...yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation." (Habakkuk 3:18 ESV)

It's evident that even people in the Old Testament understood that when God brought salvation, joy would come along with it. And Christmas is really God bringing salvation to you and me.

If you don't really have the joy of Christmas today that you had a few days ago, then there's something wrong with your approach to Christmas. It has become a day, it has become presents and food, it has become an event, but the event is not the important thing. It's the person who came who is important.

Billy Sunday used to say, "If you have no joy in your religion, there's a leak in your Christianity somewhere." You can make Christmas last all year by making the joy of Christmas last all year. That's done by inviting Jesus Christ into your life to save you from your sins. With the Saviour in

your soul, there's joy in your soul. Keep the joy in your soul, and Christmas will last all year for you.

Well, that's one way you can make Christmas last all year. Make sure you have a Christmas experience. Make sure that you've trusted the Saviour, who is the center of Christmas. Take that with you all year and you have joy.

Here's a second way to make Christmas last all year in your life. Not only keep the joy in your soul but...

II. Keep the praise on your lips

You know, when the angel of the Lord made His dramatic announcement to the shepherds, that the Saviour, the long-awaited Messiah was about to be born, Luke 2:13 tells us that suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God.

Now, you might think that this army of celestial beings must have had something more important to do that day? No, they really didn't have anything better to do. In fact, they never have anything better to do than to praise God for His son, Jesus. And you know something? Neither do we.

Okay, Christmas is a few days past. It can be a big letdown for you but not if you keep the praise on your lips. Psalm 148, "Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights! Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts!" (vv. 1-2)

I don't think these angels had a short Christmas season at all. And you know why? Because the angels had learned what a lot of us as human beings apparently have not learned and that is that Christmas is not a one-day event. Christmas is the presence of a person in our lives. And when Jesus is in our life, there is joy in our soul and there is praise on our lips.

For these shepherds, this was not a short Christmas season. They kept the praise on their lips all the time. You and I could have a long Christmas season. We can make Christmas last all year, if we do what the angels did.

If you want Christmas to last more than one day, if you want it to be more than a one-day event, make sure you keep the praise on your lips. Today, tomorrow, next week, and into next year, make sure there is praise to the Lord God on your lips for what He did for you on that Christmas morning so long ago.

Well, that's two ways that you can make Christmas last all year. A *third* way to make Christmas last all year is this:

III. Keep the story on your tongue

Read verses 17 and 18. We're talking today about how to make Christmas longer than one day, how to make it more than a one-day event. Notice what happens when the shepherds see the baby.

They're not depressed, they're not silent, they aren't robbed of their joy. In fact, it says, read Verse 17 again.

You see this kind of news just bubbles over. It spills out of an excited heart. And that's what I want us to do today. I want us to be like these shepherds. You see, Christmas is an event, but it is also a person. And it is the person who is important, not the event. If that person is your Saviour today, as he was three days ago, on Christmas, then there are people today, as there were three days ago, that you need to tell about it.

If the babe in the manger of Bethlehem, if the one who grew to manhood, and died on the cross for our sins, if He can change my life, if He can change your life, don't you think we should tell somebody about that? You see, the way to make Christmas last all year is to keep the story on your lips and keep focused on that story.

Keep the story on our lips. Keep telling people what Jesus did for you, and what He can do for them. Christmas is a great time to be a witness for the Lord, but you know what, so is three days after Christmas. And so is three weeks after Christmas. If you want to make Christmas last all year, keep the story on your lips.

There is one more thing I want to mention this morning—one more way to help make Christmas last all year.

It's important to keep the joy in your soul. It's important to keep praise on your lips. It's important to keep a song on your lips, the story of Jesus on your lips.

IV. Keep the Saviour in your heart

But it is also important that you keep the Saviour in your heart. The essence of the angelic announcement on that first silent night was this, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord."

The real issue of Christmas is, how well do you know that Saviour? You know, the account of Jesus' birth shows us two proper responses to the news. First, the shepherds told the story to everybody they encountered. They couldn't keep it quiet.

But they also had the Saviour in their heart. And so did the others. Read verses 18-19.

This also was a proper response to the event of Christmas, to keep these things in our hearts. These two things are so important - keep the story on your lips, and keep the Saviour in your heart. In other words, you want to make it both external and internal.

Let me explain what I mean by keeping the Saviour in your heart. It means keeping the presence of the Saviour foremost in our hearts, pondering again and again, who He is and what He has done for us.

So often, we relegate the Christmas story and the wonderful news of the coming of the Saviour to one day a year or certainly one season of the year. But if you want to make Christmas last all year, then keep meditating on the Saviour in your heart.

Remember the chorus in that old, very beautiful hymn, "In the Garden?" I love this song. It says,

**And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own.
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known".*

That's what I mean when I say, keep the Saviour in your heart. Ponder again and again what it means to you that you have a Saviour.

Conclusion

So how are we going to make Christmas last all year?

One, keep the joy in your soul.

Two, keep the praise on your lips.

Three, keep the story on your tongue.

And four, keep the Saviour in your heart.

Some years ago, Stuart Briscoe wrote an article for *Christianity Today*, entitled "Meet Him at the Manger." In it, he said, "The spirit of Christmas needs to be superseded by the spirit of Christ. The spirit of Christmas is annual. The spirit of Christ is eternal. The spirit of Christmas is sentimental. The spirit of Christ is supernatural. The spirit of Christmas is a human product. The spirit of Christ is a divine person."

Let's not let the truth of Christmas die. Let's make Christmas last all year.