

QUIET YOUR HEART FOR THE MAGNIFICENT MESSAGE

Luke 2:15-19

Introduction

I found an interesting parody of Luke's Christmas story the other day, which unfortunately, is all too real for many of us.

→ Illust. –

"And there were in the same country children keeping watch over their stockings by the fireplace. And, Lo! Santa Claus came upon them; and they were sore afraid. And Santa said unto them: "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which be to all people who can afford them. For unto you will be given great feasts of turkey, stuffing and pie; and many presents; and this shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the presents, wrapped in bright paper, lying beneath a tree adorned with tinsel, coloured balls and lights. And suddenly there will be with you a multitude of relatives and friends, praising you and saying, 'Thank you so much, it was just what I wanted.' And it shall come to pass as the friends and relatives have gone away into their own homes, the parents shall say to one another, 'What a mess to clean up! Let us go to bed and pick it up tomorrow. Thank goodness, Christmas only comes once a year!' And they go with haste to their cold bed and find their desired rest." (IBP #165)

Is that how Christmas feels to you? If we are to make Christmas more meaningful, we need to find ways to slow down and quiet our hearts in order to reflect on the message of Christmas.

Mention the theme of these messages – Making Christmas Meaningful: How to transform trivial pursuits into Memorable Celebrations.

- Follow the true star of Christmas: Avoid the trappings of the season by paying attention to the Light of the world.
- Honor the Stable-born King: Bring honor to the King of the universe.

Today we want to focus on the theme that we need to quiet down and spend some time away from the busyness in order to hear God's wonderful message of love and grace that was demonstrated in the sending of His Son into the world.

Mary gives us a beautiful example of one who took time to reflect, to ponder and to contemplate the significance of the events which were occurring that first Christmas.

Look at Luke 2:19. Compare Luke 2:51. Mary was obviously a contemplative type of person. Not in the sense of some mystical form of meditation. Rather, she was a person who thought deeply and pondered carefully the events of her life. She took time to wonder about and meditate on the things that really mattered. I think we could learn something from her. I would like us to observe some ways we can quiet ourselves during this season by looking at how Mary handled this whole event. To do this we need to turn back to Luke chapter 1. I would like to read vv. 26-38 to establish the setting for our reflections this morning.

The first thing we need to do to quiet our hearts for Christmas is...

Find time and a place away from the busyness - v. 39

Sometimes we just need to get away. Read v. 39 – begin by drawing a mental picture of Mary's situation. Pregnant, unmarried, but engaged (betrothed), probably confused, under a lot of emotional stress. What did she do at this most stressful and difficult season of her life? She seized an opportunity to go away for a while. She travelled from her home in Nazareth (in Galilee) to the hill country of Judea for a visit. This was a considerable trip for Mary.

In the midst of busyness and stress, it is always important to find the opportunities to remove ourselves from that stress at times.

Discuss and expand – may be a literal place away from home, although for most of us that is probably not possible or even preferable.

Yet it is quite possible for us to be spiritually renewed by getting away from the stresses of the season. It may be as simple as sitting down with a cup of cider and a book for a couple of hours. Or taking time in a quiet place to read the Bible and to meditate on the Christ of Christmas. Or it might mean going for a long walk to clear the mind and heart of all the distractions.

Mention Jesus' habit of getting away to a quiet place for meditation and prayer.

Quiet your heart to hear the wonderful message – find a place away from the busyness and the pressures in order to reflect on God and your relationship with Him.

Spend time with Family and friends - v. 40

Read v. 40 – Mary went to see Elizabeth, her cousin. It is important to build our celebrations around those who mean the most to us.

I realize that this is one of the major emphases of the Christmas season for many people, and yet it can be easily lost in the clamour and noise and the hustle and bustle of Christmas. Shopping for gifts, finding just the right decorations, looking for the all-important tree, preparing food and baking all those things that most of us don't need anyway – all of these things can so easily interfere with the relationships that are, by far, more important than the things and events of the Christmas season.

And then, in the midst of all the confusion, when the opportunity comes to be with people who are important to us, it can become an intrusion or an interruption to us.

Mary and Elizabeth must have been very close, even though they lived far apart, and when Mary was overwhelmed with all that was going on around her life, she took time to get away from the pressure, but also spent her time with important family members.

Take **TIME**** to reflect and ponder – 1:56;2:19,51**

This is beginning to sound repetitive, but the real key to enjoying the Christmas season is taking time. We live in such a busy world. We are always in a hurry. There is so much to do and so little time to do it. Mary spent three months with her cousin Elizabeth. If you check the timing in the Scripture, she was probably there until after Elizabeth's baby was born. But I can just imagine, during those months, how often they shared together of God's goodness and faithfulness.

Look again at that statement in 2:19 – Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. We need to find time to spend in solitude in order to hear God's wonderful message.

Isn't that what Christmas is really about? Taking time to focus on the blessings.

Conclusion

Slow down – quiet your heart to hear the magnificent message of the Saviour's birth. One of the keys to making Christmas meaningful is to slow down the pace of our lives. Take time to marvel at the wonder of Christmas. Take time to adore the Saviour.

➔ Illust. – "O Come, Let Us Adore Him."

At holiday time each year, local artists paint Christmas scenes on the store windows of our town where my husband and I used to own a store. One year we watched from inside as a young lady began her work. Would it be another Santa Claus, we wondered?

First, in one corner of the window, a white lamb was drawn, and gradually, with growing pleasure, we began to see the outline of a human figure. At last our artist invited us outside to see the finished work: a Nativity scene of the first Christmas; Mary, with the Child cradled in her lap. The painting may not have been a masterpiece, but it was so loving that I was moved.

Just then a car drove up and parked down the block. A mother and her four children tumbled out and hurried merrily down the street, pointing with appreciation at the various Santas and snow scenes. When they came to our store, however, one of the children—the littlest one, a boy—lagged behind and stopped.

He stood there motionless, gazing at the Christ Child as though transfixed. Then, the lad rose on his tip-toes, reached up, and touched the Baby's tiny fingers.

"Oh!" the artist gasped. "The paint's still wet." And when we looked closer, there was a tiny smudge on the picture's surface. The artist started to repair it, but my husband stopped her.

"Please leave it," he said. I knew what he meant. So did the artist. She put down the brush. Together we recognized the little smudge as a humble reminder of what Christmas really should be: a time for adoration of our Savior.

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