



26 December 2025

Where did Christmas go?

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No, today we are not focusing on the secular, commercial or even sentimental Christmas encroaching on the real Christmas more and more each year, as important as that concern is.

This question is for Christians who prepare and honor Christ throughout Advent and Christmas. *Where does Christmas go* after December 25th?

In one Christian home, shortly after Christmas the mother got up early and *took down Christmas*— the tree, wall hangings, drawings of the children, and the manger scene. They were all carefully and neatly packed away. Her toddler got up just after she finished, came into the living room, looked around, and shouted, “*Where did Christmas go?*”



We can understand the toddler’s thinking and question. The question for us is, does Christmas go away, do we neatly pack it away for eleven months until Advent begins again?

On this day after Christmas, I am drawn back to Mary. Luke tells us that after Jesus was born, after the shepherds had come and gone, she “treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.”

I am sure the “all these things” included all that happened in the previous nine months. The angel’s sudden, startling, frightening and perplexing announcement that she would conceive by the Holy Spirit and give birth to the Savior. While Scripture is silent on it, we can be sure there were a lot of wagging tongues in following months. Joseph stood by her, being reassured by the angel. When Jesus was born the shepherds came to see Jesus, the newborn Savior.

Mary remembered, valued, kept on thinking through these things. It was not just a brief season. I like to think that while Jesus was growing up her mind would keep thinking, trying to understand all these things when she looked at Him.

As valuable as the Christmas season is, the miracle of Christmas, God's great love and grace in Jesus coming into our world as our Savior should be on our calendars, on our minds, in our hearts throughout the year. How about a few suggestions to help us do that?

We can begin by reading and reflecting on the first two chapters of Matthew's and Luke's gospels regularly — not leaving them neatly packed away for the Christmas season. The more we read and think on them, the more we will be humbled, amazed, thankful, and drawn closer to God for His measureless, unfathomable grace to us in Jesus.

Building on that, spend time focusing on the gospels' record of Jesus ministry all the way through His death and resurrection. After all, that is why He came. That can be woven into your reading of both the Old and New Testaments.

Luke tells us that Joseph and Mary followed the Law and brought baby Jesus to the temple "to present Him to the Lord" because firstborn sons were to "be called holy to the Lord." We are not under the Law, but we are called to dedicate ourselves to God, to be pure and holy. That is a commitment we should review and renew regularly as we strive to honor Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to keep developing His character in us.

As well, just as the "good news of great joy" of Jesus was not just for the shepherds, but "for all the people", and the shepherds "made known" the good news and were "glorifying and praising God" for it, so should we! We are the light to people who need God as we live honoring God and speak the good news. We can and should regularly join the apostle Paul in shouting "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Don't pack Christmas away! Celebrate it in every season, in every day!

Pastor Lyle