

Theme: “Christmas Traditions” – Worship!

Luke 2:15-20 (NKJV)

¹⁵ So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷ Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. ¹⁸ And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

During this Advent and Christmas season we have been taking a look at five popular **“Christmas Traditions”** and considered how they can help us truly prepare for and celebrate the coming of Christ—both at His birth in Bethlehem so long ago, and at His second coming which could be at any time.

I did not give out the list of the traditions we were going to be looking at when we began our series, so I know at least some of you were trying to guess what the tradition would be each week. After one of our members guessed correctly what the next week’s **“Christmas Tradition”** was going to be I said to him, “I don’t think you’re going to be able to guess the one for Christmas Day.” Were any of you able to guess that the **“Christmas Tradition”** we are considering for Christmas Day would be **worship**?

The other ones on the list were probably easier to guess: gift giving, decorations, Christmas carols, and family time. While I was working on the theme for our Advent series this year, the one for Christmas Day was the one that took me the longest to pick. But when I did finally decide on using **worship** as the **“Christmas Tradition”** for the Christmas Day service, I wondered why it had taken me so long to choose it! When you think about it, amid all the wonderful and heartwarming **“Christmas Traditions”** we have, **worshiping** Jesus is the most important and best of all our **“Christmas Traditions.”** Let’s look at a few reasons why this is true:

- ✚ **Biblical Examples** - If we were to ask the question, “What is the best and most appropriate way to celebrate the birth of our Savior?” could we find some examples from the Bible to find the answer to this question? Yes! In fact there are several. What did the very first “celebrators” of the birth of Christ do on the very first Christmas? They **worshiped** Jesus!
 - **The Shepherds** - The shepherds immediately went to see this Savior that the angels had told them about and what was their response to this incredible gift from God to mankind? They worshiped and praised God and spread this Good News all over the place! **“Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. ¹⁸ And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds...²⁰ Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them” (Luke 2:17-18, 20).**
 - **Mary** – Think also of Jesus’ mother, Mary. What were the first words out of her mouth after the angel Gabriel had announced to her that she would miraculously be the mother of the Savior, the Son of God? She worshiped and praised God! **And Mary said: “My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46-47).** On the night of Jesus’ birth, her worship of her newborn son and Savior was less “boisterous” than the shepherds, but look how it is described in our text: **“But Mary kept (literally:**

“treasured up”) **all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19)**. Her worship was heart-felt, quiet and meditative, as ours so often is during the Christmas season as we again “treasure up” and “ponder” in our hearts the miracle and mystery of Jesus’ birth—Immanuel, “God with us”—God becoming one of us to save us!

- **The Wise Men** – Skip ahead a few months to the visit of the wise men shortly after the birth of Jesus. After their long journey following that miraculous star, what did the wise men do when they finally came to the place where Jesus was? Matthew’s Gospel tells us, “**And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matthew 2:11)**. They worshiped Jesus and expressed their praise and thankfulness to him by giving offerings to their Savior and King.
- ✚ **“Long-established”** - The very nature of “traditions” is that they are “long-established,” meaningful and important customs or actions “handed down from generation to generation.” Well, since the **worship** of Jesus at Christmas began at the very first Christmas (His birth), this is the longest-established of all the Christmas traditions. We continue to worship and praise our Savior in much the same way as the shepherds, Mary, and the wise men did, even to this day.
- ✚ **Meaningful** – A tradition can be long-established, but if it has no depth of meaning it will likely come to an end at some point. The **worship** of Jesus at Christmas is not only deeply meaningful in itself, it also ties together and gives meaning to all of the other “**Christmas Traditions**” we looked at this Advent season:
 - **Gift Giving** – The giving of gifts at Christmas is meant to be a celebration of the ultimate “**Gift**” of Jesus—the “present” of His presence among us, Immanuel, “God with us.”
 - **Decorations** – Think of how much more meaningful the beautiful decorations we see here in our church are knowing that they point us to the things Jesus came to bring us: the light of His Word (lights) and eternal life (evergreen; circle of the wreath).
 - **Christmas Carols** – There are dozens of really fun secular Christmas carols we could sing today, but how much more meaningful and powerful are the ones that sing about our Savior? Think of singing “O Holy Night” together at our service last night, or closing the service by candlelight with singing of “Silent Night.”

*Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love’s pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.*

- **Family Time** – What a blessing to be able to gather with our families—whether it be our physical family, or our spiritual family, our brothers and sisters in Christ—to worship and celebrate the birth of our Savior! Gathering at Jesus’ manger and His cross gives eternal depth and meaning to these treasured times we have together at Christmastime each year.

May we always “treasure up” in our hearts this oldest, best, and most important “**Christmas Tradition**” of **worshipping** our Savior Jesus. And may it fill us with the joy the shepherds and wise men felt so that we give of our treasures to Jesus share the treasure of His love and salvation everywhere we go—on Christmas Day and always! Amen.