

## JUST FOR ME!

*But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*

LUKE 2:19 (NIV)

We all have a favorite event around the Christmas season. Maybe it's shopping, tree trimming, decorating the house, the Christmas Eve service, or Christmas Day with family. While I enjoy all of those — I mean *most* of those — my favorite part of Christmas is one that most would never expect.

For years, I have cherished my ride home on Christmas Eve after all the services are done. It is the time that I get to begin celebrating and reflecting on the meaning of Christmas for myself. While much of the season I find myself sharing the Christmas joy, message, and hope with others, that ride home on Christmas Eve is my sacred time where I can focus on the Christ — just for me! It's a time when the world is quiet, normally about 1 a.m. Christmas Day. It's a time when I can shut down the marathon of ministry for a day or two and soak in some family time and Sabbath time (rest).

As much as I enjoy all the activities around the Christmas season — and I do — I enjoy when I can change gears and spend some alone time with God. When is your moment(s) that you get to spend sacred time with God? Christmas is the time we celebrate *God with us*. It was God's intentional act and desire to make time for us. Let's make sure we make time for God this Advent season. Let's not just go through the motions and be there for all the fanfare. Take a few moments alone with Him, to be in His presence and enjoy that relationship that gives us hope, peace, and life.

*Loving God, help us make time this season to experience your presence by ourselves and not just celebrate the holiday with everyone else. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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Christmas, children, is not a date.  
It is a state of mind.  
*Mary Ellen Chase*

## WE ARE GOD'S ORNAMENTS

*All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.*

JOHN 6:37-40 (NIV)

We are God's ornaments on His Christmas Tree of Life. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are welcomed into God's family, and we have His promise that we will live eternally with Him.

Just as ornaments have different shapes, sizes, colors, and textures, we, too, are all different. Some ornaments are new and shiny, and some have been on the tree for many, many years, with memories associated with them. Some members of Christ's family have been believers forever, but there are those who, in the last few moments of life, accept Him.

We are all part of His family and adorn His Tree of Life. We have different lives, experiences, and educations, but we come together in oneness. We become a beautiful family just as a Christmas tree is transformed from a bare, green tree into a beautiful, glorious sight with all its ornaments and lights. The lights of the tree represent the light of Jesus living in us.

This year as we look at all the ornaments and lights on our Christmas tree, we should remember that we are part of a bigger tree — the Tree of Life. Just as a lighted Christmas tree brightens a dark room or shines brightly in the dark night, the light of Jesus lives in us for all to see His glory in a dark world.

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