

“A Lot to Ponder”

Polo First United Methodist Church
Polo, IL

Isaiah 52:7-10

Luke 2:19-20

December 25, 2011 (Christmas Day)

Prayer: O Christ who comes, not only as a little baby in a manger, but also as our Savior Messiah, open our eyes and ears that we may see the wonders of your Word. Fill us with grace and peace in order that we might follow you in faithfulness. Amen.

As the story goes, “Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.” I bet she did! How could she not?

Just think about everything that had happened in her life in the last nine months. One minute she’s just a run-of-the-mill uneducated peasant girl, the next she’s being visited by angels and told God has chosen her for the most extraordinary task ever. One day she’s pledged to be married to Joseph, the next their relationship is on the rocks after an unbelievable pregnancy. One moment she’s at the verge of breaking down into tears because they can’t find a place to stay in Bethlehem, the next she’s filled with indescribable joy holding a newborn baby in her arms.

She definitely had a lot to ponder, that’s for sure.

Or maybe that’s not what she was pondering. I don’t know. Maybe something completely different was on her mind that night. Maybe like any parent she immediately started thinking and wondering about what her newborn baby would grow up to be. A new child possesses so much potential, after all.

If you have children, did you do that? When they were born did you immediately wonder what their first words would be, or picture them taking their first steps? Getting on the school bus for that first day of kindergarten? Getting their driver’s license? Having their first date? Going off to college? Did you wonder if they would be tall or short, smart or not? If they would get married? What job they would have? If they would make a difference in the world?

Maybe Mary did that. I don’t know. If she did it was probably a little different, though. After all, the angel had said that her son would be great, and would be called the Son of the Most High. He would establish a Kingdom that would last forever. So maybe that’s what she thought about as she looked deeply into the eyes of her son, God’s Son.

I imagine she was excited and worried for her newborn baby all at the same time. He had a lot to live up to, and he was barely even an hour old. Would people accept him, listen to him, or not?

If what the angel said was true, would it put him in danger? Would he ever be able to live a normal life?

And what about her and Joseph? Would they be able to raise this child the way that God intended, the way that Jesus needed, to become the person he was supposed to be? She was a new parent, for goodness sake! It's hard enough trying to figure out what you're supposed to do when it's your own child, let alone the Son of God. Not only are there no manuals for parenthood, but there definitely are no manuals for Divine parenthood. Mary had a lot to ponder.

Or maybe that's not what she was pondering. I don't know, maybe it was something completely different. I've never been a parent, but the sense I get is that as soon as a new parent holds that just born infant in their arms for the first time everything that had happened before that moment is suddenly washed away. I think that would be the way that I would feel. I'd be completely overwhelmed and speechless. It wouldn't matter who I was before that child came, because now I was something else entirely. A new person. Changed forever.

Not that Mary forgot about the angel or the hardship or the humiliation, but all those things didn't seem to matter as much any more. Because she was part of something bigger in that moment. She was holding new life, and *she* also had a new life.

So maybe she was treasuring this miraculous moment in her heart. She had been pregnant for nine months and mentally and emotionally preparing herself for this moment but when it finally came it was all she could do just to marvel. The baby was finally here! The One that was promised! She didn't think she could possibly love him any more than she did in that moment. She had just met this new baby named Jesus and already she had given him her whole heart. What was racing through her mind and heart was too wonderful to speak, so she just pondered and treasured these things.

Maybe she just kept on saying, "thank you" over and over again in her head. She was filled with gratitude. Filled with awe. Maybe the only word that came to her mind was "Hallelujah." And so she praised God and rejoiced. I would think that would definitely be a moment to treasure.

We have to treasure these moments in our hearts too. We also have a lot to ponder, ourselves. Whether it's our past, our future, or our present. We have a lot to think about. Because this new life that has come into the world, this baby Jesus, the Son of the Most High, changes things whether we accept it or not. Do you treasure that fact? Are you filled with gratitude and awe and Hallelujah's?

I think that come Christmas whatever you were before, suddenly doesn't matter as much anymore. Because we all are met with the possibility of new life in Jesus. Our future can be redefined and reimagined in following this Savior Lord. Our present is transformed.

But too often we get to Christmas and we're so busy and tired that we don't take a moment to sit down like Mary and ponder and treasure these things in our hearts. It's hard for me too. I mean, as soon as this service is over I'm going to get in the car with a whining dog and drive home to Sandwich where I'll be met by family. We'll have a great meal, unwrap some presents, hopefully see the Bears put up a semblance of a fight tonight, and I'll probably fall asleep on the couch. Your day might be similar to that. So when do we possibly have time to ponder?

Well, I'm here to tell you that Christmas is not the end of the story. Just because Christmas Day has come doesn't mean that tomorrow it will all be over and you have to move on to something else. The culture has already overtaken Christmas so much that it's hard enough to separate it from the shopping and the decorations and the food. Let's not surrender to the culture's need to pack up the decorations and get back to life as usual by 8 AM Monday morning.

Christ came yesterday, He comes today, and He will come again tomorrow. Each day is a new Christmas where we embrace the Savior come. We glorify and praise God for his presence with us. That's not something that happens one day of the year, it's for all time.

Let's treasure all these things and ponder them in our hearts, not only today but all days.

Amen.