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Luke 2:19

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

The sermon references Luke 1:26-38 and Luke 2:1-20.

Introduction: She was probably a teenager, maybe 15 or 16. Marriage and motherhood at that age were pretty standard in Bible times. Tradition names her father and mother but the Bible doesn't say anything about her immediate family except that she was a descendant of King David. A thousand years had passed since David died, so she wasn't exactly a working royal. She didn't live in David's town, Bethlehem, or anywhere near David's capital in Jerusalem. She lived in Nazareth, a little town up north. She was a simple Jewish girl who took her faith seriously. Her name was Mary and she became the most famous woman in history. She was the mother of the Son of God.

St. Luke is the only Gospel-writer who gives us details about Mary and Christmas. Luke wasn't there, of course; he doesn't come on the scene for 50 years. What makes perfect sense is that Luke sat down with an aging Mary and interviewed her: "What was it like?" How did it all happen?" Mary shared the facts with Luke and the Spirit led Luke to write them down: What the angel Gabriel said about the son she would bear and the questions she had; why she and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem when Mary was so pregnant; how she clothed the baby and where she laid him; what it was like when the shepherds arrived. And then Luke added what only Mary could have known: **She treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.** As she sat there in Bethlehem on that holy night Mary looked back at everything that had happened over the past nine months. It was all inscribed on her mind with indelible ink; nothing would erase it. She reflected on what it all meant and what it implied: God had come to rescue her and the world from sin.

What really happened at Christmas? What are the facts? And what do they mean? How do they apply to all of us? Let's get into the mind of Mary tonight. Let's remember what she remembered: let's review what she was thinking; and let's reflect on what it all means for us. On this Christmas Eve let's

Treasure the Truth and Ponder the Promise

Mary probably remembered what she was doing when Gabriel appeared out of nowhere, and she certainly remembered that she was scared. Gabriel calmed her down: **Don't be afraid Mary; you have found favor with God.** What Gabriel said next wasn't so scary as it was shocking: **You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.** Virgins don't get pregnant and Mary's mother taught her that. But what followed was surreal. **He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end. The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.**

Did Mary know the ancient promises? Her parents taught her at home and the rabbis taught her in synagogue school. She knew about the child to be born and the son to be given who would **be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace** and that he would **reign on David's throne forever.** She surely remembered the sign Isaiah provided to King Ahaz that a **virgin would conceive and give birth to a son and**

would call him Immanuel which she knew meant God with us. Of course, every Jewish child knew about Eve's descendant who would **crush the serpent's head** and undo the horror of sin. Mary learned the facts from Gabriel who told her that **no word from God will ever fail** and she began to grasp what the facts meant in her life and in everyone's life. That Christmas night **she treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.**

Too many people in our world—even people in our neighborhoods—leave Jesus lying in the manger and cooing in his cradle. We dare not do that. We confess that the baby Mary carried for nine months was “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father.” In this baby who moved and kicked inside her **all the fullness of the Deity lived in bodily form.** There is no life that he does not create, no planet he does not move, no power he cannot destroy. There is no thought or word or action that he does not see. There is no name he does not know, no step he does not guide, no sadness he does not cure, and no prayer he does not hear. The Babe of Bethlehem is present everywhere, knows everything, controls all things. On this Christmas night **treasure that truth and ponder that promise.**

Did Mary have morning sickness? Did her clothes stop fitting? Did she feel the baby move? If she told St. Luke about this, he didn't mention it. She shared the facts. The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem was an obligation, not a vacation. She was very pregnant, but Caesar Augustus had ordered a census and she and Joseph had to go: 90-plus miles, like from here to Madison—and the Bible never mentions a donkey. Did she have labor pains? Was delivery hard? Did the newborn cry? Again, just the facts. **And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.** There was nothing special here. This was her first child so everything was new, but there was nothing sensational. A boy baby like billions of boy babies. She held him and warmed him and nursed him. Did she remember what Gabriel said? Of course she did! She knew she was holding the Son of God in her arms; she knew she was nursing Immanuel: God with us. But he was still a baby, her baby, and she cradled him and cuddled him! **She treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.**

Jesus was a baby just like I was a baby and just like you were. And then he was a toddler and then he was a teenager just like we were. And then he became an adult like we are. He got tired and he slept. Sound familiar? He was hungry and he ate. He was sad and he cried. He was tempted and tested as we are. The Son of God had all the characteristics of God but at the instant he was conceived he took on all the characteristics of a human being. St. Paul wrote, although **in very nature God, he did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.** He became one of us and he did this for us. He took on bones and blood so he could take on our sin and guilt. As a man he stood under the authority of the law; as God he obeyed the law perfectly. As a man he suffered and bled and died; as God his blood and death was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. **He who had no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him.** On this Christmas night **treasure that truth and ponder that promise.**

The shepherds broke the quiet cooing of the manger scene. They burst in and bubbled over. We were just **abiding in the field, keeping watch over our flock by night. Then the angel of the Lord appeared and the glory of the Lord shone round about us. We were terrified. The angel said to us, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.** And then all at once a multitude of angels appeared in the sky; **they were praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.** They blurted this all out: Can you believe it? We came with haste and here you are! And we're going to tell everyone! Noisy, excited shepherds; I wonder if Mary giggled. But Mary heard the message the angels sang and the shepherds heard. On earth peace and good will to men. The tragedy of Eden was undone, the slavery of sin was upended, the power of Satan was demolished. And all through this baby she held in her arms. **She treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.**

What Mary treasured and what she pondered is the **heart** of Christmas. An overfilled inn, a pregnancy at term, a bed made of straw, and a bunch of shepherds, are not the heart of Christmas. Here is the heart of Christmas: Jesus the God man, Jesus the God with us, Jesus the Word made flesh took all our sins away. He forgives all our miserable mistakes, all our defiant failures, all our pathetic weaknesses. He removes our guilt, he overcomes our death, he destroys our hell. He provides peace with God and peace for our hearts. He preserved our past, he has plans for our present, and he guarantees our future. His Word is truth and his promises never fail. On this Christmas night **treasure those truths and ponder those promises**. With Jesus you have life with God forever. "Dear Christian friend, on him depend; be of good cheer and let no sorrow move you. For God's own Child in mercy mild, joins you to him—how greatly God must love you." Amen.

This sermon was preached by Pastor James Tiefel.