

From Days Of Old: Taking Time To Ponder
By Jason Huff
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Luke 2:19

“As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.”

I want to play a game with you tonight. I want you to turn to your neighbor and tell them the one word that comes into your mind when I say “Christmas.” And you can’t use the words Jesus, Christ, God, or Lord. Take a minute and do that. What words did you come up with?

There are some really great words that sum up Christmas. “Immanuel”, “incarnation,” “reconciliation.” With one word, it’s kind of hard to get everything in. Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, shepherds, wise men, Herod – there’s lots of people. There’s lots of concepts floating around – “God with us,” “Savior,” “Messiah.” There are the elements of Bethlehem and the manger and the inn. So I want to introduce another word into the mix, one that we don’t always associate with Christmas but is absolutely necessary if we’re going to really *get* it. And that’s the word “ponder.”

When the shepherds are scared half to death by the angels proclaiming that Jesus is the Savior, Christ the Lord, they run into Bethlehem and check it out for themselves. Then they go all over the countryside telling anybody who’ll listen to them. I’m sure a lot of people thought they were crazy, but it didn’t matter. Many were astonished at the news. It’s at that time that Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Pondering – reflection on who we are and who God is – is key to the Christian tradition. This week, I thought of two beloved hymns that encourage us to do just that. *Praise To The Lord, The Almighty* tells us to “ponder anew what the Almighty can do if with His love He befriend thee.” And in *How Great Thou Art*, when the author “considers all the works Thy hands have made,” he breaks out into song – “then sings my soul, my Savior, God, to Thee! How great Thou art! How great Thou art!”

The wisdom of the Bible tells us that pondering is a good thing. Proverbs 15:28 teaches, “The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.” The author of Ecclesiastes was called “a wise man who taught the people knowledge, pondering and searching out and arranging parables.” In comparison, the immoral woman of Proverbs 5 “does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, but she does not know it.” The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:8, “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about (dwell on, ponder) such things.”

