



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for Christmas Day
December 25, 2017

Now What?

John 1:1-14

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Last night, in our Christmas Eve services, we read the account of Jesus' birth according to St. Luke. You know that account; it's the one that has the most complete narrative of the events surrounding Jesus' birth. Toward the end, we're told that "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." If Luke were writing his Gospel today, he might put it this way: "Mary thought about all that had happened and said: 'Now what?'"

Is that how you're feeling this morning? Is "Now what?" the question you're asking yourself as the excitement of Christmas has already begun to fade? I guess most of us by now have torn into at least some of the presents under our tree. If you have, then part of the answer to the question is: "Well, now I have to take out the trash, set aside things that don't fit to take back to the store, and go to Walgreens for more batteries!"

Unfortunately, for most people celebrating Christmas this year, that'll be the extent of their consideration. They'll think about the "stuff" they got, be glad to have a paid holiday from work, and not give Christmas another thought until the credit card statements arrive.

Today – Christmas Day – as the lights and tinsel begin to lose a little of their luster, it's



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easier to cut through all the sentimental trappings we associate with Christmas Eve. Today, we Christians can begin to do what Mary did – take some time to ponder what the celebration of Christmas really is.

John tells us in today's Gospel some incredible facts that we, along with Mary, would do well to "ponder."

He describes Jesus' birth like this: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" And with that said, we ask: "Now what?" "What does this mean to me, to those around me, and to the world?"

Simply put, this means that God Himself entered our world to become one of us, to live among us, to share our humanity. All the presents we so frantically buy and exchange are merely symbolic of God's Gift to us – the Gift of His Son who took on human flesh to be our Savior.

Now maybe that's not a new idea for you. But have you ever really "pondered" it? Have you taken time to consider what it means?

Years ago there was a famous psychiatrist who was well known for his work with catatonic schizophrenics. People suffering from that are lethargic, have no energy, and are almost "zombie-like".

This doctor was different from most of the others. They would remain distant from their patients. This doctor's treatment, however, was to move in to the hospital ward with them. He slept in the same kind of room they did, in the same kind of bed as theirs. He ate the same food. In many ways he led the same kind of life they lived. By doing this he communicated a subtle, but clear message to his patients. Their doctor understood them and knew how they felt and what they were going through.

And not only did he understand them, but he went above and beyond in another way. He'd put his arms around them and hug them, showing them love when often they'd never known it before. Many times, the first words these patients would speak when they came out of their stupor were "Thank you!"

This, beloved, is what God did for us at Christmas. He moved into our "ward" of sin and death. He placed His bed beside ours and lived the life we live so that He could take care of us. Now, on this Christmas Day we, too, say "thank You" to God for setting aside His divine majesty and descending from heaven to redeem us and re-establish peace between Himself and us.



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Truly, the angel's words to the shepherds are meant for us as well: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Jesus came to fulfill the Father's promise to Adam and Eve that a Savior would restore the severed relationship between God and man that was incurred by our first parents in Eden. When Jesus died on Calvary, He didn't just die an earthly death; He endured the equivalent of eternal death in hell for every person who would ever live on this earth! And remember: this is the Son of God. He had everything; He created everything, gave up everything in order to be one of us, to take our sin upon Himself and be an acceptable substitute for us. Ponder that one awhile: God – dying – for you.

Like Mary, this Christmas Day we "treasure up all these things and ponder them" in our hearts as we marvel at the love of God for us – the love that would cause Him to make a Gift of Himself to us, to redeem us, so that we might have forgiveness of sins and life with Him forever.

This is why we're here again this morning, taking time to "ponder" – and thereby to remain in awe at the love of God for us! And along with that – to "ponder" the wonder and awe of how Jesus continues to come to us even now: in the mystery of His Word and blessed Sacraments. Using human language, He declares to you His love – from eternity and into eternity. He says, "I love you. I always have – and I always will! I will be with you always, even to the end of time."

Ponder also how He comes to you using water, bread, and wine – simple elements. In Baptism He washes away your sin and calls you His very own – forever! In Holy Communion, He's found in, with, and under the bread and wine, not only lavishing forgiveness on you, but also strengthening your faith.

You see, this is why we Christians, when we greet one another with "Merry Christmas," we have a far deeper meaning for those words – and it's why I don't really use the watered down "happy holidays" – because we've "pondered" the mystery of the unlimited love of God for us! And a generic "happy holidays" just doesn't cut it. So . . . Merry Christmas, beloved! Your Savior is born. Amen