



[Pastor Keith GeRue](#)

Sermon for Christmas Eve
December 24, 2021

In Her Heart, In Our Hearts, In God's Heart

Luke 2:1-20

¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

What things? *All* these things. All that had happened over the past nine months. That was quite a bit! Things that had changed this young woman's life forever. For which *all generations would call her blessed* (Luke 1:48b).

It started when the angel Gabriel came to her and told her that she was going to be a mother. Good news of great joy, certainly! But . . . not after she was married, but before. And . . . not because of her unfaithfulness, but because of her faithfulness. And . . . she was not just going to have a son, but God's Son, who would not just be her son, but her Savior. And the Savior of the world. That's all something to ponder! That God would do *that*. And that God would choose her.



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Then there was her time with her relative Elizabeth, who was also miraculously with child. She was part of the plan, too. Her son would prepare the way for Mary's son. And so, these two women and their two sons would be forever linked. And she pondered that . . . God's plan and purpose, all coming together, in them.

After those three months with Elizabeth, she returned home only to find out that her betrothed, Joseph, was planning on divorcing her. Who could blame him? But what would become of her? Wedding dreams turned into nightmare. Until the angel came to Joseph, and told him of the plan. He, too, was needed. He, too, was important. He would be the guardian of God's Son, his own Savior. So, Joseph remained faithful to his pledge. He cared for Mary. He cared for her son as his own. And Mary pondered . . . God had planned for this, too.

Then came the news that Caesar Augustus decided a tax would be a good thing, and everyone would have to go to the city of their family's origin to be enrolled and pay this tax. By this time, Mary was very pregnant. It would not be an easy trip. They weren't wealthy. But they had no choice. So off they went to Bethlehem - a trip that would not soon leave her mind! That she would ponder again and again. At least there would be family there they could stay with . . . right?

Well, turns out, no. All the guest rooms were already filled. But there was a spot, with the animals. It wasn't much, but they could have it if they wanted it. Not the delivery room Mary expected nine months ago, but beggars can't be choosers. At least it would be warm there, with the animals. And so, her son was born, and she laid him in the manger that was there. A tough way to start a life! But nothing about her son's life would be easy, she would learn . . . and pondered in her heart.

But still Mary had *more* to ponder, for God wasn't done yet. Still had more up His Divine sleeve. For the angels had come back again, this time to shepherds, to announce to them the birth of their Savior. And they came to see Him. And they marveled. Not just at a baby, but at their Lord, like this! Come for them. Come to save them. And Mary pondered *this* - not just the shepherds, but *all* that God was doing. Nine months that all led up to this day, this moment.

But *more* than nine months actually, thousands of years of prophets, priests, and kings, all leading to this day, this moment. This moment that not only changed her life forever, but would change the world forever.

That's a lot to think about! To ponder!

So how about you? What are all the things you are keeping and pondering in your hearts?

Christmas brings many memories, many thoughts, old and new. Maybe for you there are lots of old memories, of Christmases past. Maybe you are pondering a loved one who isn't with you this



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Christmas. Or maybe a loved one who is with you for the first time this year. Perhaps you are pondering an uncertain future, or rejoicing in the blessings and gifts you have received. Like Mary, there is certainly no shortage of things for us to ponder - of the past, present, and future. Of joys and sorrows. Of hopes and disappointments.

But Mary didn't just remember or just think about these things - she *pondered* them. The Greek word there is *things thrown together*. Which refers to things thrown together like following a recipe, making something greater and more delicious than the sum of its parts. Mary knew that's what it was - the work of God, working something far greater than she knew. Nothing by accident, nothing left to chance. All according to God's Word and promise. *All things working together for good* (Romans 8:28), no matter how they might have seemed at the time. Mary pondered that, and marveled at that.

Marveled, because what all this teaches us is that it is not only Mary and you and I who ponder - **it is also God. Our LORD pondering us in His heart.** That you are always in His heart and on His mind. That what He is doing is not random, but always for you and your salvation. We may not always understand it, how God's recipe works. It may not make sense to you, how all these ingredients, all these things happening in your life can possibly come together into something good . . . yet, we see tonight that they do, indeed. That after nine months of mixing and stirring up, after thousands of years of prophecies and actions, ***to us a child is born, to us a son is given. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.*** The darkness of sin, of confusion, of unbelief, has been lightened by this child, that we see the hand of God, the plan of God, and the mercy and love of God. The recipe just right, and doing something far greater than we could imagine, or which we could hope for.

So, amidst all our ponderings this night, **we ponder this, too:** the love of God for us this night. The love of God that would cause Him to send His Son into the world *like this*. The love of God that would cause Him to send His Son to the cross, God and sinners to reconcile, the innocent to die for the guilty, and then rise to give life to the dead. The forgiveness He won on the cross and the life that sprung forth in His resurrection, now given to you, to each of us. For a life which cannot end.

Ponder how this recipe of God is still happening today. How it has brought you here, to this place, tonight. A random series of events? No. God coming for you, working for you. For always you are on His mind and in His hands. That you receive the greatest gift of all - His Son - by grace through faith.

That's a lot to ponder! And marvel at. Just as Mary had so much to ponder, too.

So, ponder this! That whatever else Christmas is for you this year - joy or sorrow, hope or disappointment, alone or with others - it is a night of wonder. The wonder of God born for you.



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In the Name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.