­­­Verses:Micah 5:2 and Luke 2:1-7 Occasion: Worship

Location: First Presbyterian Church of Lake Mary December 24, 2020

Pastor: Joe Raymond

**Song:**

**O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant  
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem  
O come and behold Him, born the King of Angels**

**O come, let us adore Him  
O come, let us adore Him  
O come, let us adore Him  
Christ the Lord**

**A Time to Ponder and Treasure**

Scripture readings**: Micah 5:2 and Luke 2:1-7**

**Micah 5:2**

**But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
    who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
    one who is to rule in Israel,  
whose origin is from of old,  
    from ancient days.**

**Luke 2:1-7**

**In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.**2 **This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.**3 **All went to their own towns to be registered.**4 **Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.**5 **He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.**6 **While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.**7 **And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.**

**This is the word of the Lord! Thanks be to God.**

**Let us pray**

Heavenly Father, please quiet our minds and open our hearts

to Your truth, and please

**…let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart   
be acceptable to you,  
   O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.**

Sermon

She was just a teenager.

Yet, she loved God, and He knew it!

Still, we can understand that she was “much perplexed” when one day, she had an unexpected visitor who greeted her, saying,

Luke 1:28

**“Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”**

As we might expect, she found this unusual. Verse 29 describes her reaction:

29a**…she was much perplexed by his words**

And it reveals what she did with her wonderment:

**29b…[she] pondered what sort of greeting this might be.**

She “pondered.”

Remember this word; we will come back to it.

Returning to our story…

In v. 30-32 the angel comforted Mary saying, **“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God…**

and he went on to explain **… you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.**32 **He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.**

Mary’s response to this astonishing news shows deep faith.

Luke 1:38

**“Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”**

How could such a young girl have such mature faith that strengthened her to receive such startling news?

* Surely she anticipated that this calling would be difficult.
* She was engaged to Joseph, but not married.
* She should not be expecting yet.
* What would Joseph do?
* What would her family and the towns’ people think?

Yet, these thoughts are not what we hear her express.

Instead, she declares her willingness to serve God…**according to [His]word.” (v38)**

Not only did Mary display her deep faith to the angel, but also to her relative, Elizabeth, whom she hurried off to visit, traveling

* for 4 to 7 days
* 100 miles

Upon arriving, she spoke beautiful words praising God.

They begin in Luke 1:46

**46b My soul magnifies the Lord,  
47   and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,**

**for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.**

and her words continue for 9 verses ending with  
**54 He has helped his servant Israel,  
    in remembrance of his mercy,  
55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
    to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”**

Clearly, Mary knew God to be the sovereign ruler of the world, and she knew His promises. She was humbled that God had chosen her for such a high calling.

Again, I ask: How could such a young girl have such mature faith?

For our answer, let us return to the word “ponder.”

In the Bible, you may see the same concept translated as:

* call to mind
* remember
* wonder
* muse
* meditate

It signifies collecting different ideas, a little at a time, and connecting them together to gain understanding.

We read in Luke 1:29 that Mary pondered the words she heard.

She was not the only one who did this.

Consider the Psalm writers:

Psalm 77:11

**I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord;  
    I will remember your wonders of old.**12 **I will meditate on all your work,  
    and muse on your mighty deeds.**

Psalm 64:9-10

**Then everyone will fear;  
    they will tell what God has brought about,  
    and ponder what he has done.**

**10 Let the righteous rejoice in the Lord   
    and take refuge in him.**

What conclusions can we draw from these verses?

It seems clear that pondering what the Lord has done and said leads to rejoicing, praising God, and finding refuge in Him.

There is at least one additional scene in the story of Jesus’s arrival where we see Mary pondering something. It was when the shepherds reported their revelation from the angels.

Luke 2:19 **…Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.**

Mary responded in 2 ways:

* treasured
* pondered

Treasuring is when one assigns high value to something and holds it close and tight.

Tonight, we gather, reading scripture and singing about a spectacular event over 2000 years ago in Bethlehem.

What might we ponder and treasure about this story?

Here are some suggestions:

As we read in Micah 5 this evening, it was foretold that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. But, the couple lived in Nazareth, about 100 miles away!

Yet, sure enough, we read in Luke 1:4 that the expectant couple traveled to Bethlehem! Ponder for a moment on how God ensured Christ’s proper birthplace.

It “just so happened” that at that inconvenient time, all people were told to go to their hometowns for a census. Nothing short of a royal decree caused them to trek that distance with Mary in her condition!

Consider the wonderment that Caesar Augustus ordered his census at that exact time. It was no coincidence. We conclude God has sovereign power over even earthly rulers! Our exercise in pondering has led us to the realization that God uses earthly rulers to bring about His purposes! This understanding is faith-building treasure!

Along those same lines, let us ponder how the prophet Micah knew to record where Jesus would be born. Consider what we know from 2 Timothy 3:16

**All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness…**

Since Micah 5:2 is scripture, and we know scripture is inspired by God, we can conclude that God inspired Micah to write future events that he could not have known himself.

This is faith-building treasure that leads to even more!

Why?

Ponder how God has preserved the scriptures all these years, so we can study them today!

There are endless details to ponder and treasure about our Lord in His word. We only need to ask God to show us His wisdom and lead us in our search to know Him. In this way, our faith will grow stronger, and we will find we can say as Mary did, **“Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”**

As we gather this treasure, we will grow in faith. May we be willing to step out in that growing faith to serve God wherever He leads us, for truly, this good news came to each of us on its way out to someone else, using us as messengers!

To those of you who do not yet know the Savior whose arrival and life we ponder and treasure tonight, I urge you, please call or come see me as soon as possible, so we can have that life and death conversation.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

As You teach us from Your word, and we sit in prayer at your feet listening closely to the answers to our pondering, we treasure and celebrate all that You have brought to pass in the birth and life of Jesus on this earth! Thank You for giving us Your Son, our Savior and Lord.

Amen

Friends, let us continue our celebration on this holy night by gathering around the Lord’s Table together.

# INVITATION TO THE LORD’S TABLE

# Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God! They will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God.

# According to Luke,

# When our risen Lord was at the table with his disciples, he took the bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

# This is the Lord’s Table.

# Our Savior invites those who trust him to share the feast which he has prepared.

# GREAT THANKSGIVING

# Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

# It is right to give our thanks and praise. It is truly right and our greatest joy to give you thanks and praise, eternal God, our creator.

# You have given us life and second birth in your Spirit. Once we were no people, but now we are your people. You claimed Israel as your chosen nation and raised up the church as a witness to the resurrection, breathing into it your life and power.

# BREAKING OF THE BREAD

# The Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat.

# This is my body, given for you.

# Do this in remembrance of me.

# In the same way he took the cup, saying:

# This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

# Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

# Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord, until he comes.

# PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

# Gracious God, may we who have received this sacrament live in the unity of your Holy Spirit, that we may show forth your gifts to all the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ.

# Amen.

**May the God of Hope**

**Fill you with all joy and peace in believing**

**So that you may abound in hope**

**By the power of the Holy Spirit**

**Go in PEACE**