

Advent: Wondering

Selected Scriptures

If we believe what the popular song claims, this is “the most **wonderful** time of the year.” *Wonderful*. What a word! Is that *your* experience this season? Are you full of wonder...or worry, stress, sadness, frustration—or something else?

Wonder is that sacred place where insight, holy fear, awe, and joy converge. It’s a place where we are often left breathless and speechless...and where we can discover deeper faith and renewed hope. Without wonder, we may be able to exist, but we’ll never really *live* the way God intended.

Today, on the fourth and final Sunday of Advent, let’s look one last time at the characters of the first Christmas. They have much to teach us about cultivating hearts of wonder.

wonder OBSERVED

The magi’s _____ (*Matthew 2:10-11*)

The shepherds’ _____ (*Luke 2:8-9, 18*)

Joseph & Mary’s _____ (*Luke 2:33*)

wonder CULTIVATED (*Luke 2:19*)

Cultivating WONDER this Christmas

Some truths & observations to “treasure up” and “ponder” in your heart:

The season of Advent means there is something on the horizon the likes of which we have never seen before....What is possible is to not see it, to miss it, to turn just as it brushes past you....So stay. Sit. Linger. Tarry. Ponder. Wait. Behold. Wonder. There will be time enough for running. For rushing. For worrying. For pushing. For now, stay. Wait. Something is on the horizon. **Jan L. Richardson**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....and the Word *became flesh and dwelt among us.* (John 1:1, 14, emphasis added)

“Incarnation” is from Latin, and it simply means “in flesh.” We use this word to mean that the Second Person of the Trinity assumed a human nature without ceasing to be the eternal Son of God.

The coming of Jesus into the world is the most stupendous event in human history. British journalist **Malcolm Muggeridge** (*a skeptic until late in life*)

If the thing [i.e., the incarnation] happened, it was the central event in the history of the Earth. **C. S. Lewis**

We must never allow anything to blind us to the true significance of what happened at Bethlehem so long ago. Nothing can alter the fact that we live on a visited planet. **J.B. Phillips**

So long as we imagine it is we who have to look for God, we must often lose heart. But is the other way about—He is looking for us. **Simon Tugwell**

Despite our efforts to keep him out, God intrudes. The life of Jesus is bracketed by two impossibilities: a virgin's womb and an empty tomb. Jesus entered our world through a door marked "No Entrance" and left through a door marked "No Exit." **Peter Larson**

Rejoice, you who feel that you are lost; your Savior comes to seek and save you. Be of good cheer, you who are in prison, for he comes to set you free. You who are famished and ready to die, rejoice that he has consecrated for you a Bethlehem, a house of bread, and he has come to be the Bread of Life to your souls. Rejoice, O sinners everywhere, for the restorer of the castaways, the Savior of the fallen, is born. **C. H. Spurgeon**

In that baby at Bethlehem, God offered the world a peace treaty. And Jesus, at Calvary, signed that treaty in his own blood. **Leigh C. Bishop**

There were only a few shepherds at the first Bethlehem. The ox and the ass understood more of the first Christmas than the high priests in Jerusalem. And it is the same today. **Thomas Merton**

Probably few of us have the faith or the nerve to tamper with hallowed Christmas traditions on a large scale, or with our other holiday celebrations. But a small experiment might prove interesting. What if, instead of doing something, we were to be something special? Be a womb. Be a dwelling for God. **Loretta Ross-Gotta**

To have experienced the Christ, to have encountered Jesus of Nazareth, to have run headlong into the person of God in the flesh must have been like stepping into the path of a hurricane. **Martin Bell**

If you find it hard to believe in God, I strongly advise you to begin your search not with philosophical questions about the existence and being of God, but with Jesus....If you read again the story of Jesus, and read it as an honest and humble seeker, Jesus Christ is able to reveal himself to you, and thus make God. ... real to you. **John Stott**

For God loved the world so much that he **gave** his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Merry (or “Mary”^{Luke 2:19}) Christmas!