

ADVENT: WEEK THREE

day 17

Ponder Them in Your Heart

Luke 2:1-19



Here we have the story of the actual birth of Christ. Mary and Joseph are forced to go on a journey at the end of Mary's pregnancy that would have been painful. They had to travel at least 70 miles, and even though we usually see images of her on a donkey, no donkey is mentioned and it's likely the journey happened on foot. This journey would have disrupted every "nesting" plan she had made, that would put her far from the women who were supposed to support her in labor. They end up in a dirty cave-like structure in a crowded town where she is able to give birth to the Son of God and then forced to put Him in a feeding trough for animals. His first visitors are smelly shepherds, the social outcasts of the day. And in the midst of all of this, we get this truth about Mary: "But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart." Mary is able to understand that just because the picture looks different from what she expected doesn't mean it isn't worth being treasured...she's learned that lesson.

Pondering means to think about something carefully. This is a Godly characteristic described throughout the Old Testament. Psalm 77:12 says, "I will meditate on all your works; I will ponder your deeds." Psalm 143:5 says, "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that You have done; I ponder the work of Your hands." Mary's response to an even more unexpected outcome to an already impossible situation shows us that she had to have been developing this Godly characteristic in her life. Based on the struggles Mary had already been through since saying YES to God's call on her life, I think she also knew that it was important to hold the moments that were beautiful close to her heart to prepare her for any challenges that were sure to come. Furthermore, she was wise to choose NOT to ignore what was beyond her understanding but also not to find it stressful or agitating; she took her time to engage in the mystery of all that was happening around her. When you face unexpected situations in your life, is your response like Mary's? Do you focus on the flaws, inconveniences, and disappointments, or do you hold tightly to the miracles and wonders? Mary had the choice to focus on the terrible environment, the undesirable welcoming party, and the absence of the familiar. Instead, she held tightly to the wonder of an angelic choir, the care of a faithful man, and a newborn baby that both needed her to survive and had come to

save her life. May we take the remaining days of the Advent season to ponder miracles both old and new, never forgetting to focus on the one that changed history: the birth of Jesus Christ.

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prayer:



Jesus, thank you for the reminder to ponder Your work in our environments, including the parts we can easily appreciate and the parts we cannot begin to understand. You show us how to readjust our focus to the ways that You are faithfully showing up in our lives instead of being overwhelmed by the places that contain disappointment and loss. ThankYou for giving us something we can always focus on with joy and hope: Your promised return! Amen.

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