

## *Treasuring*

*Luke 2: 15-20*

**First Presbyterian Church  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

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When the shepherds heard the announcement and saw the multitude of the heavenly host, they wasted no time. Immediately they said, "Let us go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." The Scripture tells us that they came with haste, and soon found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. You almost get the feeling of cartoon characters whose legs start churning before their bodies actually move. You can see these shepherds tripping over each other as they ran down the hill to the village of Bethlehem. You can see them stumbling into the doorway, all talking at once, making known what the angels had said. The shepherds are all energy and urgency, haste and excitement.

By contrast, we read how peacefully Mary received these first guests who came to visit Jesus. Luke writes, "But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart." The shepherds want to go and do and speak and praise. Extroverted action. You have to love their enthusiasm. Mary wants to gather in all the extraordinary pieces of this impossible occurrence. She wants to hold these things securely in her mind. She wants to ponder all these events and consider how they hold together. She wants to experience, deep in her heart, how her life is taken up into this extraordinary story God is telling in the world through her baby.

These days before Christmas, it's not hard to mimic the shepherd's pace. Anyone looking at us would say, "And they came with haste." We have a thousand details pinging through our minds. So much to do, organize, get, spend and finish. We can't feel the wonder of the story anymore. We can't get our hearts connected to the angel news.

This morning, though, we can let Mary lead the way. Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. She received them deeply. She contemplated them. She let them flow into her life.

How can we do that amidst the craziness of Christmas? The good news is each person here has taken a great step. We've left home, we've left work, we've left ordering and wrapping behind. We've stepped out of ordinary life into the

sanctuary of God. Sanctuary. A place of peace and safety. A place where we can stop and listen. Think and pray. You've already come physically to the sanctuary. I invite you now to come spiritually and mentally as well. Let go all that's whirring in your minds. Rivet your attention on the story. Receive the word as it is told and sung.

In the cantata we're about to hear, you will hear these words sung to the shepherds,

Rise up shepherds, O leave your sheep.  
O leave your sheep upon this shining night.  
Rise up shepherds, follow.  
Go see the Child, the everlasting light.  
He comes to earth with joy and salvation.  
Go worship and adore.

That's our calling too. Don't just let the music happen to you. Happen to the music. Don't wait for the music to capture your attention. Surrender your attention to the words and music now. Leave the sheep of daily life behind. Attend with heart and mind, soul and focus to the story. Think about its meaning. Feel its power. Locate yourself inside this great drama of salvation. For it is an open story. You are welcome inside it. Give yourself to treasure the music and ponder the words in your heart, as we receive *On This Shining Night*.