

Mary Pondered All These Things

Luke 2:8-20

Richard C. Allen

December 24, 2013

South Glastonbury

Connecticut

Mary pondered all these things in her heart. Don't you just love the verb 'to ponder'? To ponder...to weigh carefully in the mind. To ponder conjures up an image of Hercule Poirot, the famous detective created by Agatha Christy. Hercule Poirot considers all the evidence, all the testimony, ponders it all until a single truth bubbles up in his mind. And when that one truth emerges in his consciousness, his eyes light up, for he knows he's on the right track.

Mary takes in what the angel has announced. She takes in what the shepherds have reported. She takes in what her own heart reveals. She ponders all these things until a single truth emerges in her consciousness. God is doing something God has never done before. God is appearing in the world as an innocent child, the child of her very own womb. The God who had only been spirit has now taken on flesh; has now become vulnerable even as human beings are vulnerable.

To ponder is becoming more and more of a luxury in our culture. We live in a pressure cooker world. There's hardly time to make gravy as grandma used to make, let alone have time to ponder the mysteries of God. There's hardly time for a leisurely stroll through an orchard, let alone ponder what claim Christ has on our lives. There's hardly time to go caroling at the houses down the lane, let alone have time to ponder the presence of angels.

I am one of the fortunate ones. I have a time for pondering written into my job description! It's right there in my senior minister contract! Thou shalt take time to ponder.

So, I got to wondering, what would be the impact on our culture, if everyone's job description contained similar language. Along with all the other duties, it would be typed in red ink, "Thou shalt take time to ponder." A CEO of a Fortune Five Hundred company, a dish washer at a restaurant, a single mom with four kids, a clerk at a department store, a kindergarten teacher, the gas station attendant, the security guard at the bank.

If we were all to take this time to ponder, I believe there would be significant changes in the culture. Violence would diminish. Kindness would skyrocket. Mental health would take a turn for the better. Relationships would go deeper. I would even predict that productivity in the market place would be on the rise.

Mary becomes a role model for our modern day society when she ponders the signs and the intuitions and the gut feelings of her inner life. Men, women, youth, and children would all do well to follow her example. I am remembering a day when a friend and I drove our bikes over to the Airline Trail just off exit 16 on route 2. As we pedaled, I took the lead. I pedaled hard and got up a good head of steam, broke into a sweat, and then turned to look back. My friend was nowhere in sight. I couldn't believe he wasn't keeping up with me. I figured maybe he had a flat tire. I waited. Eventually, along he came, pedaling as slowly as you can possibly pedal without tipping over. He was pondering. I had gone biking for exercise; he had gone biking to ponder. And ponder he did.

He was my teacher that day, for there is a time to exercise and a time to ponder. Whenever one takes this time to reflect on the mysteries of life and death, the mysteries of love and passion, the mysteries of angels and miracles, there is a kind of healing that impacts the whole universe.

Mary pondered all these things in her heart, and the world was never the same. You and I ponder the mysteries of our own lives, and in some way that defies definition, the darkness of the world gives way to the light.

In the greatest of hope, Amen!