

Jesu Juva

“Pondering These Things”

Text: Luke 2:1-20; Isaiah 9:2-7; 1 John 4:7-16

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

***Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.***

That is what *All Ye Faithful* have *Come* (LSB #379) here this night to do as well. Ponder all these things. You know the story - Mary and Joseph, travelling to the *Little Town of Bethlehem* (LSB #361), *Royal David's City* (LSB #376), to register for the tax. Arriving too late to stay with family or even in guest quarters, and so having to spend the night where the animals were kept. And then the birth. Placing Jesus in the manger, the feed trough. The angels announcing this birth to the shepherds, and then their visit.

You know the story, and we sang it again this night in all those beloved hymns and carols. So you have not come tonight for information, but to treasure up all these things and ponder them in your heart. After all the busyness of shopping and wrapping, baking and card writing, travelling and shipping - it is time to ponder. Tonight there are lots of treasures under trees, but this is your true treasure: this child, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

But that night so long ago, what did Mary ponder? What are all the things that she treasured in her heart? The birth - of course. The visit of the shepherds - certainly. The arduous journey while great with child - probably. But even more. The visit of the angel nine months before this, telling her that she would be the mother of God's Son. The amazing kindness of Joseph in not divorcing her - quietly or publicly - but caring for her and the child.

But more too. For as Mary spoke while visiting her relative Elizabeth while they were both pregnant, she marveled at the plan of God that was now happening. All the promises of old now being fulfilled. The Saviour, the One those great men of old believed in and the great women of old hoped would be born from *them*, was now being born *from her*. A most unlikely maiden chosen by God to bring about His plan of salvation. *From Heaven Above to Earth He Comes* (LSB #358).

There was so much to treasure up and ponder.

And for us as well. For even as we treasure up and ponder this story, we remember also the reason for it: *sin*. The sin that makes our world such a dark and evil place. But not just the world, our own hearts too. Just think back over the past eleven and a half months - the hurtful words you spoke and the kind words left unspoken. The lies and half-truths told to

get what you wanted, or to get away with what you already did. The people you hurt and those you failed to help. Prayers left unsaid and God's Word neglected. Negative assumptions about those you looked down on, those less fortunate than you, and ugly desires that would make you blush bright red if anyone else knew about them. Good intentions never carried out, yet always finding the time to criticize, take revenge, and complain. And what else, what other darkness, for you?

But tonight, there is good news. Not just of a birth, but of *a Saviour*. That Isaiah words are true for you: ***The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.*** Not just then, but to us as well, walking in the darkness of our hearts and in a world of deep darkness, a comforting and marvelous light. For the Light of the world is born. The Light of God to show us God's love and give us the forgiveness of our dark and ugly sins.

For how else to explain this birth we ponder tonight than God's love for you? That's in fact how John described it: ***In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.*** For truly, God wants no one to perish in sin, but to have life - both now and forever. That's why He takes the human nature He is born with and that was laid in the wood of the manger, to the wood of the cross, *nails, spear to pierce Him through* (LSB #370 v. 2), to be swallowed up by our darkness, sin, and death, and then rise from death and the grave. That you rise too. Rise on the Last Day to a life that is eternal, but rise also now, this day, to a life that is new. No longer stuck in darkness and sin, but lived in the light and love of your Saviour.

That's why *The Herald Angels* (LSB #380) came to the shepherds that night and praised God, saying: ***Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*** This newborn child was God's good will toward all people, and would bring God's peace to all. *God's peace*, which is not to be confused with earthly peace - it is greater than that. For as long as there is sin in this world there will not be peace on earth. But there is God's peace - a peace that is ours even amid the unrest and strife of life. The peace of sins forgiven. The peace of life beyond death and the grave. The peace of knowing that nothing can snatch us from our Saviour who has come and joined Himself to us.

We ponder that too. And *Sing We, Now Rejoicing* (LSB #386) with the angels and the shepherds . . . even if your heart doesn't feel so joyous tonight. That's okay. This night's not about pondering happiness, but about pondering *What Child This Is* (LSB #370) born for us. A child who came into a world of sin, a world of sadness, a world of death, a world of trouble, a world of darkness, a world of strife, a world that often wants nothing to do with Him - but as messed up as it is, a world of His creating and love, and upon which He would not turn away. And so ***for us a child is born, unto us a son is given.*** God's Son, for you.

*Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.*

You too. God has kept His promise and fulfilled His Word. There is *Joy to the World, for the Lord is come* (LSB #387)! *O Come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord* (LSB #379).

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.