

Sermon for Christmas Eve 2013

THE WAIT IS OVER—THE CHILD OF PROMISE HAS BEEN BORN.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Just for a moment, could you even **begin to imagine** what it must have been like to be Mary? Here she was a **young** woman which at that time would have been someone to be about 14 years old, she was **pledged** to be married, the **angel** Gabriel comes to her and says, *‘Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.’*, then he goes on to tell her how she is going to be **with** child, she will give **birth** to a son, and his **name** will be Jesus. Also, he will be called the **Son of the Most High**. Now, Mary wants to know **how** all this is going to happen since she is **still** a virgin. Gabriel goes on to **tell** her that, *‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.’* Mary’s **reply** to him was, *‘I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.’* She was a **young, humble servant** of the Lord’s who **accepted** God’s call to give birth to **His** Son. Like I said, could you **just begin to imagine** what that **must** have been like to be Mary?

Now, I am wondering how many of us would have reacted in the same way she did with such **calmness, faithfulness, with utter belief, trust, and acceptance** in what was going to come to pass.

What I would **like** to focus on is the **portion** of our gospel reading for tonight when it says, “*But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.*” What could a **14 year old girl** have been treasuring and pondering in her heart? I could **only** suppose it must have **all** been a **bit overwhelming** for her. There was so much going on there—she was **late in her pregnancy**, for she and Joseph to **travel** from Nazareth to Bethlehem—which was **nearly 80 miles**—would have **taken about 1 week**, we believe that she was on the **back of a donkey** for this journey, by the time they **got to Bethlehem** it was time for the **baby to be born**, there was **no room** at the inn, so when the baby **was born** she placed him in a manger which was **no more than** a feeding trough for animals **and** mangers were **usually placed outside** so that means Jesus could have been born **outside**, and then she **wrapped** him in some cloths. *That is a lot to take in.*

The shepherds, (who **by the way** at that time were considered to be the **lowest of the low** as far as forms of career opportunities went as it was common for many of them to be thieves), well, **they** were watching their flocks in the field, then an angel of the Lord **came** to them and **told** them to go to Bethlehem to find a baby wrapped in cloths lying in a manger. (Bethlehem at that time was a **rather small town** of between **300** and **1,000** people but since the **census** was going on **many additional** people were there in town. The shepherds were **to go find a**

baby in a manger **somewhere** in town.) A **great** company of **heavenly** host appears to them, there is **singing and praising God** then they **all leave** the shepherds. The shepherds **hurry off** to see what all this news is about. When they **found** Mary, Joseph, and the baby they **spread** the word concerning what had happened to them and all were amazed!! After that the shepherds **returned** to their fields **glorifying, praising God**, for **all** they had **seen and heard**. **This** is what Mary was treasuring and pondering in her heart. **All these memories, miraculous memories, all these words to treasure and ponder in her heart regarding the birth of her Son—good news of great joy for all people.**

Here we have the **birth** of the Son of **God** himself—born to a woman who was **nothing** out of the ordinary by **our** standards, not **rich** in the eyes of the world, and not of any high **social** status. Yet, God chose **her** to be the mother of His Son-the child of promise-the one the prophets had prophesized about centuries before. The Son who will grow to give **hope to the hopeless**, the one who will give **peace to those who feel no sense of peace**, the one who can bring **joy to those whose life is anything but joyful**, the one who can offer **grace to those who are looking for some form of acceptance**. He lives to be a Son who embodies the word love as the **Savior** of the world—the one who came to **save us all**.

This is what we have been waiting for. **God with us and God for us.** The **time** has arrived: **JOY TO THE WORLD, THE LORD HAS COME.**

All **thanks** be to God. **AMEN.**