

## **Ponder, Proclaim**

‘Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.’ (LK 2:19)

Many of us experience a tension between prayer and action. We may know well the value of pondering the mystery of God-with-us, this baby Jesus who wants to ‘tabernacle’ with us. Prayer is the main way we become that home where God dwells with us through His Spirit.

Yet we are surrounded by many homeless ones who are clueless that God became flesh and now wants to dwell with them. If you are like me, something ignites during prayer and flares up to break the silence: ‘God came; He’s here! He wants to be with you! You don’t have to work out your hard life alone!’

Perhaps this call to ponder and proclaim are two parts of the same message. Our faithfulness to both is how we create a whole message for the world to hear.

LK 2:15-20 gives us clues to this wholeness. A lot goes on here—a host of angels had just dazzled these shepherds with the proclamation that God the Savior was alive and well and living in a nearby stable. The shepherds found Jesus; we can assume they were more awestruck by God in His littleness than the power-and-light-show of the heavenly host. Jesus must have radiated glory from the manger.

The shepherds were the first non-family members to witness God-in-the-flesh. They were at the lower end of the world’s system; poor rovers, they often were suspect of petty crimes and artful dodging. Fitting that they would become the first new members of the holy family! St. Paul said that we were all slaves to the world’s system until God came; Jesus transforms us from worldly slaves to sons and daughters of the Father. In Him, the homeless secure a home (Gal. 4:3-7).

Mary treasured this encounter between shepherds and the Child-King. She pondered it (v. 19). For the first time, she witnessed the impact of her newborn upon others. It must have taken her breath away. Wow, she thought, this baby is the real deal. He will ditch the rich and lift up the lowly. Everything the angel said is coming to pass.

In Greek, ‘ponder’ means to bring together a few ideas and brood over them in order to create a richer deeper thought. The Latin word for ponder is ‘to conceive’; through her pondering, Mary is once again conceiving new life as she considers the life of her Son. She lights the way for our prayerful renewal as well.

Think of your growing awareness of the truth of Jesus. He probably did not overtake you right away. Rather, His gentle, hidden movement in your life became apparent in prayerful moments and you knew: He IS the Light of my world, just when the darkness seemed to have the upper hand.

That's good news! Pondering the light of Jesus in our real conflicts is the substance of solid proclamation. Let's go back to the shepherds. They find glorious Jesus and upon seeing God-in-flesh, they race out to tell others that in truth He is the Savior of all, much to the hearers' amazement (v. 17, 18). This Jesus has power to make poor ones rich, homeless ones secure, sons, slaves!

As you ponder the impact of Jesus in your life, consider how He is helping you forsake worldly enslavements for your true status as a child of God. The deeper you ponder your transformation the truer will be your proclamation. People will hear the Gospel through the contours of your broken, glorious life!

And you will receive more authority in your own life as you courageously step through fears like 'People don't want to hear it; I don't want to be a hypocrite', etc. You overcome fear and other enslavements through your proclamation (Rev. 12:11), and make a way for others to overcome too.

Early on in my walk with Jesus, I tried to dull my identity conflict (between 'gay' or Christian) by moving back into the 'gay ghetto' with an atheistic French family. God would not let go peacefully. Sick from my vacillations, I pondered and prayed and at last decided to follow Jesus simply because He was real. Peace flooded my soul that night; I nearly bounced into a party given by my French family.

A woman there eyed me suspiciously, and asked about the cross around my neck: 'What does this Jesus do for you?' I calmly responded that He was setting me free from my 'gay self' and same-sex addictions. She started crying and asked if I would speak to her son who was 'gay' and suicidal. I did just that. She now knows God is both merciful and powerful. He makes slaves sons.

'His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.' (Jer. 20:9)