

Luke 2:1-7

We Wonder

I wonder about a lot of things. Many trivial, others more significant.

We wonder.

We wonder about the world. We wonder what will come of it given the political climate around the globe. We wonder what will become of this earth with the effects of climate change. Some wonder whether or not they should bring a child into this world. We all tend to wonder what the future will hold.

On the days before Jesus' birth and that night when the Christ child was born, many wondered about the events that were unfolding. In our time we may wonder at what did all of this mean then and now. As I looked at the characters in the Christmas story as told by Luke, I wondered what would Emperor Augustus and Quirinius the governor of Syria have thought if they knew that the decree to be registered, each in their own towns, would fulfil a prophetic scripture, one in which Joseph and Mary would find themselves in the little town of Bethlehem.

One could wonder about how Mary and Joseph were managing as the baby was at full term and due to arrive anytime. What were their thoughts and emotions given that they did not have a room in which to spend their nights? We gather from the detail that the babe was laid in a manger, a feeding trough for animals, they were at least indoors, protected from the harshest elements.

So much uncertainty.

And Joseph would not have been a rich man. As a carpenter working with his hands, a tradesman, there would not have been any extra in their coffers. We know through Luke's story telling that Mary was pregnant before the marriage, and though that would not necessarily mean ruin for women now, in Mary's time it would have been a deep disgrace. Joseph could easily have turned his back on her. Yet, from Matthew's gospel, we are told of angel visitors and dreams that gave the couple the determination to forge forth together.

Their minds must have been full of wonder...wondering how they were going to manage the gossip, the finances, the travel, the birth itself, and their marriage, given all the challenges.

Then there were the shepherds. Awe and wonder are the words that come to mind. Well that would be after they got over the terror of an angel standing before them with the glory of the Lord shining around them. Can you even imagine?

Right now, one of the big stories in the States is about drones flying over New Jersey. This is causing alarm and concern for people, now think about that being an angel who is then joined by a whole host of angels. No wonder they were terrified! But once the angels left and the night sky was back to its familiar self, the shepherds said to one another, let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened. In other word the wonder and curiosity of it all had them on the move.

The shepherds find the mother, father, and child. One can only wonder at what that moment must have felt like. What was it like to see the holy one as a baby? We wonder what each of them was thinking as we imagine the scene. Whatever they experienced from the angels to the manager with the child, it was enough for the shepherds to tell others about it as we are told that "all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them." They continued on their way glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them. The shepherds must have wondered about that night for the rest of their lives.

And finally, Mary. What she must have wondered as all these things came to pass as is written in the story, "she treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart." What parent or caregiver hasn't gazed upon a newborn child and wondered about what the future would hold for them. In the early days of her pregnancy, Mary sang a song that tells us that she knew that this child she was carrying was no ordinary child and that he would grow in strength, bringing down the powerful, sending the rich away empty, and lifting up the lowly. She must have wondered about his safety, about who would be his friends, how would all this unfold.

And then we are left here on this Christmas Eve to wonder. What brought you here this night? Is it tradition? Is it your faith? Maybe like Mary we can wonder about the power of Jesus to transform lives. Can we go a little deeper than just sitting in the beauty of this sanctuary and this moment, with the Christmas lights here and on homes and buildings, and the promise of gifts, the singing of songs and listening to stories, and wonder, what is God up to through Christ today, in us, in our families, our homes, in the church and in the world?

We may wonder if we can trust this Jesus to be someone who truly can save us from our sin, if Jesus really is someone who can transform our lives. We wonder if God seriously has the power to act in the world. Can our wonder be allowed to inspire our faith, our trust, and our love of the one who loved us so much that he became one of us, flesh and blood?

Our God is God of the earth, not just in some heavenly realm, but both in heaven and on earth, as Creator and as Redeemer. Let's wonder with awe and curiosity but take it a

step further into trusting that God is with us, that God has got us, because God promises to be with us and came to us in the Christ child.

Tonight, we sit in awe and wonder, as we should everyday, but don't let it stay there, look for God with us, among us, for us. Wonder and believe. Christ is born for us so that we can live life with hope, peace, joy, and love this day and everyday. Amen.