



Message from Pastor Tim

December 2011: Pondering Emmanuel

“And all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.” (Luke 2:18-19 NRSV)

What must have that scene looked like that special night of our Savior’s birth? Strange visitors, rough people, those who tended sheep, came to pay homage to this tiny child. And, oh, the trip, the lack of rooms in the inn! Having to give birth to your first born child in a stable? It must have seemed so unreal, so strange, so much like some sort of “bad dream”. This couldn’t have possibly been the way that Mary imagined this scene when the angel Gabriel announced her pregnancy! This couldn’t have been what she had in mind when she said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.” (Luke 1:46-49 NRSV)

And now, here she was, sitting in a stable, surrounded by men. Trying to make sure that in the excitement of their worship, that they didn’t do something untowardly with the child. He was after all, just a newborn child. Her son, God’s Son. And for the most part, these were uncouth peasants from the backward parts of Israel who were hovering over her child. This is not what the angel had told her it would be like!

Surely there was a peace beyond all human understanding when this unassuming young woman sat in the stillness of the evening amid dimly burning wicks, cradling the Child, soft and small. Despite the scene not being up to expectations, the baby’s breath must have passed like incense over Mary’s ponderings and prayers. Here was an oasis of light, a harbor of tranquility. A Child was born, and humankind need fear no longer. A peace was won. A joy had come. Emmanuel! God was at home with us.

There is a lesson in this scene for all of us. Often God does not come in those serene moments, but instead makes an appearance wrapped in the swaddling clothes of the struggles and sorrows of this world. Our listening to God is challenged by the world’s clatter and clamor.

In the midst of this busy season, with its own distractions of consumer worship, family gatherings, hectic schedules, not to speak of the current worldwide economic crisis and the continuing war in Afghanistan, may we, like Mary, find a time to treasure the words the shepherds come to share, and ponder them in our hearts. May we find a peace and serenity in the newborn Christ who broods in our being and waits to be born anew, among us, this Christmas season.

*Peace,
Pastor Tim*