

December 19, 2022

[Luke 2:1-20](#)

True confession – when the doctor first handed (more like launched) my newborn daughter into my arms, I was terrified. In those first few seconds, I felt the full range of human emotions -- exhaustion, fear, wonder, and a wild sense of awe that this little life was mine to hold.

One of my favorite verses in all of Scripture is, “But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” Mary had just traveled by donkey a week-long journey to Bethlehem. She had given birth in an unfamiliar, uncomfortable stable without her own mother or a midwife to care for her. As she held her raw, fragile infant in her arms, a crowd of shepherds arrived rejoicing with the good news, “your son is a Savior born for you! The Messiah, the Lord!” The scriptures could have said, “Everyone was amazed... *And Mary...*” Yet in every translation I searched, it’s “But Mary...”

But Mary... pondered, how could this fragile, vulnerable infant be the Messiah who had been promised?

But Mary... pondered, why did God choose me to bring this child into the world? Have I done it right?

But... Mary pondered, what does the future hold for my little child, this future king?

Amidst the drama, hurry, and amazement, Mary took a moment for stillness and contemplation.

Mary is the only person in the Bible who is present at Jesus’ birth and at his crucifixion. To care for and love Jesus as one’s own son as well as the Messiah is a conundrum I could never wrap my mind around. So, I love that in this moment, with the full story of Jesus’ life and death yet to be unspooled, Mary depicts an incredibly human moment of wonder and awe, perhaps of fear.

As we approach the celebration of Christ's birth, the beginning of his journey of compassion, of protest, of instruction, and preparation, as the drama unfolds, let us find a moment to pause in the not-knowing just to ponder; to hold out (what may be fragile) hearts in our very human hands to the Lord and make space for wonder.

Dear Lord, we give you thanks for the story of Christ's birth, and for Mary - for her courage, her humility, and for her humanity. Help us make space in this season to pause amidst the celebration and allow for the complex emotions within us to surface-- perhaps fear, doubt, love, hope. Help us remember that you welcome us as we are, before we've worked through it, before we have solutions, or certainty. You do not ask us for these things, only for faith. Amen.

Mary Flynn Niemitz