

**Bruton Parish Church
Christmas Day
December 25, 2009
The Reverend Charles A. Robinson**

Blessed be the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Amen.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2).

The reading from the prophet Isaiah, which we Christians apply to Jesus, goes on to proclaim that a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually... and so, it has in our lives and in the lives of all who have come to know him as God incarnate – a light shining upon us.

We have lighted the light of Christmas and we will carry it with us as we walk out the door into our Christmas Day.

That we are gathered here is a proclamation in itself that for us Christmas is more than traffic, hustle, and bustle, colored lights, gifts, and wrappings.

We know that something wonderful has happened, that some kind of new light has come into the world and while we do not always understand all that has happened to us or to the world with Christ in it – we are awed by his presence. That is the mystery of it all and that is a treasure.

There are many themes on which to focus in this Christmas drama. There is the larger world into which this child was born – brought to encounter and to challenge the power brokers of the world, like Augustus and Quirinius. An alternative kingdom of Pax Eterna instead of Pax Romana. There is the more immediate world into which this child was born – brought to identify with the ragged, dirty, and simple shepherds. God is present for grubby farm laborers under a big sky.

This morning, I want to focus much more specifically and spend but a few moments to consider this young woman Mary who gives birth under confused and troubling circumstances.

Those that were here for Fourth Advent know that we spent time with this woman as she travelled to visit relatives early in her pregnancy. She tried to consider the words that had been given to her pondering her circumstances. She was isolated from society and perhaps much of family. She apparently did find understanding in the person of a cousin who was also preparing for an unusual birth of an extraordinary child who would serve God and help bring God to the world.

Now many months have passed and Mary gives birth to her child far away from her home.

In this very lengthy reading and despite all of the images we conjure up, we are told seemingly very little about Mary, what she may have experienced, what she may have thought about, how she may have felt.

Luke writes in previous passages that she had been told some pretty spectacular things about her calling, her destiny, and that of the child she bore – things that would have been beyond her comprehension. And we are told that she was faithful and obedient to this call.

Now, in the midst of the birth of her child under the shadow of oppression, and after the arrival of a group of weathered and coarse men with a report of angelic visitation, Luke simply writes of Mary that, “(she) treasured¹ all these words² and pondered³ them in her heart.”

However, Luke’s words are always written in a considered and deliberate fashion with carefully chosen words that carry deep and broad meanings.

Literally, this phrase means that she carefully kept in her mind, preserved in her memory, and guarded all of the happenings and events that had led her to this place and had called her, and that she gave careful, serious, and deep consideration and reflection to all of their implications.

In those few powerful words, we hear that this young woman, who would not likely have asked for her lot in life, in this moment, begins to grow into it, with careful and wise consideration.

She has become the mother of God in the world – she has born God to the world. She has become our inspiration for bearing God into our world, as well.

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¹ **25957** συντηρέω impf. συνετήρουν; (1) (carefully) keep in mind, preserve in memory (LU .19); (2) guard, protect, keep safe and sound (MK .20); passive be preserved (MT 9.17)

² **5343** ῥήμα , τος n what is said, word, saying; thing, matter, event, happening

³ .7 συμβάλλω ; ἐπιβάλλω: to give careful consideration to various implications of an issue - 'to reflect on, to think about seriously, to think deeply about.' συμβάλλω: ἡ δὲ Μαριάμ πάντα συνετήρει τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα συμβάλλουσα ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς 'Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them' Lk 2.19. ἐπιβάλλω: καὶ ἐπιβαλὼν ἔκλαιεν 'and as he thought seriously about this, he cried' Mk 14.72. For another interpretation of ἐπιβάλλω in Mk .72, see 68.5.

It is Christmas! Treasure all these words. Ponder them in your hearts. Consider all their implications for our own bearing of God to our world.

This is not the end of a story, but the beginning of our story, our journey.

Merry Christmas and blessed be the name of God.