

**SERMON FOR THE DIOCESE OF BUNBURY CHRISTMAS 2024:**

**GEOFF CHADWICK**

**LUKE 2:1-20**

**PONDERING**

How are your preparations going for Christmas lunch? Have you been “*throwing a few things together*”? Did you spend hours pondering what the menu might be?

Roast turkey or cold ham.

BBQed prawns or take away on the beach?

Pavlova or flaming pudding?

Vegemite sandwiches with a glass of orange juice?

Now I’m reminded of that Vicar of Dibley episode...

Did you know that Mary, the Mother of Jesus did some pondering of her own?

The text says:

*But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. (Lk 2:19, NRSV)*

The word “*pondered*” in the original Greek is *sumballousa* which literally means: *to throw together*.

This however does not mean a hap-hazard collecting of ingredients like we might say about last night’s dinner. It means *a considered gathering of thoughts*.

The bible dictionary (*Strongs Lexicon*) puts it like this:

*The Greek verb "sumballó" primarily means to bring together or to throw together. It is used in the New Testament to describe the act of pondering or considering something deeply, often in a reflective or meditative manner. It can also refer to the act of conferring or discussing with others, as well as encountering or meeting.*  
<https://biblehub.com/greek/4820.htm>

So Mary, having just given birth to Jesus, begins to ponder.

And why wouldn’t she?!

Let's think about what's happened to her in the lead up to Jesus' birth.

(As portrayed by Luke.)

- She's been visited by an angel.
- She's pregnant in a way no one can explain.
- She's been told that her son will be "*The Son of the Most High*" (Lk 1:32, NRSV).
- Her old relative Elizabeth is also pregnant.
- She's been on the road to Bethlehem.
- And she's been visited by shepherds telling stories of angels singing praises to her child.

I don't know about you, but I'd be pondering a few things!

But there's more to this than meets the eye. Luke, the Gospel writer, is inviting the hearer to be like Mary – to be one who ponders the story.

So how's your pondering going?

I hope it's going well.

The story of Jesus' birth needs to be pondered deeply.

- It's a birth that ultimately bettered people's lives, and changed the course of history.
- It is through Jesus, that we see what God is really like. No longer do we think of God as some "tyrant in the sky." We now know God as one who risks vulnerability.
- Through Jesus, we see a God who risks it all by placing his his very self in the hands of new parents.
- Through Jesus, we see a God acting as perfect loving community through the work of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.
- Through Jesus, we see that greatness lies in humility.
- And it is through Jesus we are challenged to ponder how God fits into our lives.

It is wonderful that you are here today to be a part of that pondering!

Now I do wonder...

I wonder if our modern world has lost the art of pondering – especially at Christmas? It's all “rush and go” with very little time to “stop and be”.

If this is the case, then the Christmas story is in danger of losing its influence. In fact, I don't think I've seen a single nativity scene on TV this season. I've seen plenty of Santas and even Darth Vader in a pageant procession! Whilst I don't want to be a kill joy-it would be good to

*See a little Christmas – right this very minute!  
Jesus in the manger, angels there to sing it.  
Yes we need a little Christmas, right this very minute.  
Mary there to ponder meaning, calling us to wonder with her!*

(With apologies to Jerry Herman and Johnny Mathis!)

So may we like Mary, ponder the meaning of Jesus in our lives. Let's throw a few thoughts together!

And if someone asks “What did you do for Christmas” say with confidence:

*I went to church to think about the birth of Jesus and how his birth changed the world  
and even changed me!*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**