

Consider What God is Doing

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[0 : 0 0] And then gather in here and we'll get our Sunday school hour going and take your Bibles from Matthew chapter 2 this morning, Matthew chapter 2, as we're going to take a couple of weeks here and just take a look at a few things with Christmas and the things that are going on.

But you know, if you don't know yet, you're three days away from Christmas. So the question that follows is, how many are done with your Christmas shopping?

All the rest of you, you're in trouble. Time is short, amen? But the pressure's building to get that accomplished. But you know, when it comes to this time of year, you know, what are some of the things that you find that people relate to just this time of year?

Because when it comes to the comments that you hear this time of year, really sometimes just frazzled from all the stuff going on. I don't know how many of you feel frazzled, you know.

What other terms do you think of that describe this time of year? Hectic. Hassle, yeah. Crowds.

[1 : 1 4] What's that? Crazy people, you know. I mean, yeah. Yeah, keep perspective. But you know, it's things that, you know, sometimes it's stressful.

It's lots of things build this time of year. I mean, all those things seem to come upon us and we need to sometimes slow down. In other words, we end up like the person who made this statement.

We'll see who knows where I got this quote from. And it says this, it says, What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money, a time to find yourself a year older but not an hour richer?

If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with Merry Christmas on his lips will be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. Ebenezer Scrooge.

Who said that? Ron up there. See, there's always one in the crowd that picks him out, you know. Because the thing is, if we're not careful, we get so busy we lose sight and we can become an Ebenezer Scrooge about things.

[2 : 1 7] And to not understand the reason for that. But some of us, I think, can relate because it just really kind of feels busy, doesn't it? You know, the things that were chaotic that were really chaotic at that first time when Christ was born also.

You know, oftentimes we don't stop and consider what was really going on. What was happening in the life of even Mary and Joseph during the time that Jesus was born?

Because sometimes we say, well, how does that relate? You know, we can't really relate. You know, everything is joy and happiness. But you know, the first Christmas and the season and time around it was really pretty chaotic.

There was a lot of things taking place that would have been challenges to Mary and to Joseph. You know, all the things that were going on in their family and the things around it.

And when Jesus was born, so many things were happening with miraculous things and joyous things. But also some things that were challenges.

[3 : 21] You know, Luke 2 makes a statement about Mary that says this. It says, but Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. You know, to discuss within. Have you ever pondered life and all that's going on?

You know, that word ponder means to discuss with yourself. That's what that word means. To just look at those things. And when all this was happening, that's what the Bible says. One of the things about Mary, she took all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Because not all of them were joyous things. Some of them were some things of some great challenge. Some things that were difficult to walk through. You know, all those struggles and hassles that would come.

Mary found time to meditate upon the significance of the moment. And to marvel at what all was happening. You know, sometimes I think we need to slow down and really ponder what is this time of year.

What is it that we celebrate? What is it that we ought to pay attention to? And to take away this morning, I want to encourage you to consider. You know, are you really considering pondering in yourself what all is happening?

[4 : 36] Because yes, we can ponder the craziness and the difficulties and the challenges, but also to ponder the things about what God is doing. What God has done for you.

To consider those things. Reflecting on a part of a Christmas celebration. Celebration because there are times when the best thing we can do is slow down and consider the blessings that God has given to us.

When things get crazy, I think we can slow down and ponder. Even discuss with ourselves and really consider what God is doing. Because when it comes to all this, it says Mary pondered them in her heart, but we're going to take a look at what was actually happening.

Because we say, well, that was easy for her. Well, not really when we consider. Because look over to Matthew chapter 2 this morning. Matthew chapter 2. Notice here in verse 13.

It says this.

[6 : 00] My son. Let's pray. Heavenly fathers, we take a few moments here just to consider the need of pondering those things of what you've done for us.

Even in the midst of crazy things happening around us. Challenges of life. Lord, all the things that go on. And Lord, we pray that you just would help us to slow down this morning.

And to really consider those things. Even today, but even in the days to come. Lord, of what you've done for us. In the many blessings that you've given. And Lord, we just ask it in your precious name.

Amen. You know, when you consider that following the birth of Jesus, you know, even leading up to the birth of Jesus was a little bit crazy. I mean, I don't know about you, but if you think about family events and family things going on.

Have you ever just listed out the things that were going on in Joseph's and Mary's life? They had an engagement. You know, the betrothal period. You know, and there was probably, that was probably filled with lots of excitement and energy.

[7 : 02] And all these things are happening. And then an angel comes to both Joseph and Mary and brings to them word that says, hey, Mary's going to be with child. I don't know about you, but that would probably turn your world upside down a little bit.

They're dealing with those things. The high of those things. You know, the enjoyment and the thought of it. But then the baby was to be born. I mean, it tells us that when Mary was about to give birth, they got, they ended up having to do something and they had to travel.

You know, most of us think about travel this time of year and you're just like, oh man, I got to deal with it. Joseph and Mary had to deal with travel from all the way up in Galilee, all the way down to Bethlehem to do what?

Nothing else that really excited was to what? Pay taxes. You know, Mary's pregnant. Taxes are due. You got to travel. They got to accomplish all these things.

When they get there, the accommodations weren't what they scheduled. You know, I mean, I mean, when you really start thinking about what was actually going on, it sounds pretty crazy, doesn't it? And you have all these things and they end up in a stable where she gives birth to Jesus in a barn.

[8 : 19] That's a lot going on. All these things are happening. And then the shepherds show up. You know, they had unexpected guests on top of everything else. You know, they weren't expecting the shepherds to be there, but suddenly the shepherds come looking for the child.

That's often where we leave. But, you know, to Joseph and Mary, the next thing they had to do, we find that they went to the temple in eight days and they dedicated Jesus to the Lord and they had an offering to bring.

They had a responsibility to the Lord amidst all these other things that were going on in life. And then we find that, you know, we know that life didn't settle down.

Sometimes we boil down Christmas into like a one day event. But really, even leading up to the birth of Jesus was over a nine month event. I mean, the year before Jesus was born was pretty crazy.

The year after Jesus was born gets even crazier. Because now they're back home and the wise men come and God tells Joseph, hey, pack your bags.

[9 : 20] You're moving to Egypt. All these things are happening. While Jesus is still an infant and the wise men come, just another disruption in their life.

After going through all that, how many can relate with Mary and Joseph? I mean, we might not have the same story and the same chaotic stuff happening, but I think Mary and Joseph could relate to where we are, even as we celebrate Christmas oftentimes in this time of year with the craziness of life and the things going on and all the different things you're trying to balance and all these things.

And now they're told they were forced to flee for their lives because Herod the Great was seeking to execute the potential rival. Because if you remember that when the wise men came, where'd they look first?

Where'd the wise men go first when they first came from the east? They went to Jerusalem to Herod. It's like, hey, if we're looking for a new king, we ought to look where? At the present one.

That would be, you know, that was logical. You know, that was the first place it was logical to look. And then, you know, they find that Herod doesn't know. So Herod inquires and they tell him and we find that the wise men are led by the star to where Jesus was.

[10 : 35] At this time, Jesus wouldn't have been in Bethlehem. Would have probably been back up in Galilee. Back up where Joseph and Mary were from. Where they had, their life had been.

And we find here that when they come to Joseph, we find that he tells them that right after that, that's where we picked up there in verse 13. In our text, it says, and when they were departed, you know, the wise men come, they bring gifts, they bring all these things.

And then when the wise men depart, you know, I imagine that they're probably pretty excited. You know, hey, here's these guys traveled a thousand miles over months of time to bring very precious gifts of the day.

Because remember, what did the wise men bring? They brought what? Gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Myrrh. Now, the gold we understand. But frankincense and myrrh were also very valuable commodities.

You know? Frankincense is still pretty expensive today. What they brought were things of great value. I imagine they were like, man, this is pretty awesome. You know?

[11 : 46] Look what God provided. But Joseph here is warned in a dream to flee to Bethlehem, or flee from where they are to go to Egypt.

He tells them here, notice what he says. And when they were departed, the angel of the Lord appeareth unto Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt.

And be thou there until I bring thee word. You know? Because Herod wants to kill him. So now Joseph's got a new responsibility. And all these things that are going on and happening along the way, you know?

He's warned in a dream to flee and to go to Egypt with Jesus and Mary to protect them. You know, when somebody flees, it's important of all the things that they bring with them and all the dynamics around them.

And Joseph was selected by God to watch over Jesus as his stepfather. You know, we always have to keep that in mind that Jesus wasn't even Joseph's biological child, but yet he stepped up and took all the responsibilities.

[12 : 54] He stepped up to do those things. And as an earthly father, he was the perfect choice that God had. And after Joseph received his dream about the imminent threat to Jesus and the plans that Herod had, he took action.

You know, as you think about, you know, of Joseph and Mary going down into Egypt, you know, there's a story about a young teacher with the Sunday school asked her students to draw a picture of their favorite Bible story.

You know, usually the usual stories were drawn like Moses floating in the Nile or David and Goliath. And one boy drew a picture of a jet craft screaming through the sky with four passengers on board.

And the teacher asked him, Jimmy, what Bible story is that? And Jimmy replied, the Bible says Mary and Joseph and Jesus flew to Egypt. Oh, said the teacher with a wide grin on her face.

Who's the fourth person? Jimmy looks at her and says, that's Pontius the pilot. Okay, we'll move on from that one. But, you know, you think about what's inferred here about Joseph's response.

[14 : 00] Because notice, what was Joseph's response? Look at verse 14. What was Joseph's response to all this? He took action, didn't he? He not only obeyed God, but he did what?

He obeyed God immediately. He obeyed God immediately. The threat was so real and the dream so vivid that Joseph didn't want to waste a minute.

To respond to God's directive to get out of there. You know, this interlude in the life of Jesus' family heading to Egypt was going to require some resources.

You know, isn't it interesting that God provided what was needed at the exact time it was needed? That God had everything already carried out.

Everything there. They received gold, frankincense, and myrrh from the wise men, which would have helped pave all their expenses down in Egypt. Joseph and Mary and his young and the family moved to Egypt and stay until, it says, the death of Herod.

[15 : 04] You know, verse 15 says that they were to stay there until Herod died. Now we know, as we consider, what did Herod do? Because Herod was upset that they had come.

Why did Jesus have to be brought down into Egypt? What did Herod do in the account? He said he wanted to kill all the children under two years of age.

They had to flee from what was going to be there. There's nothing, though, recorded in history that suggests that Herod knew that Jesus escaped.

I think Herod probably believed he got him. But Jesus escaped because God was there taking care, giving direction to Joseph, who was willing to do that.

And here, following the birth of Jesus, in all these things happening, all these things, life being upside down, life being crazy, we find that Mary is said to have pondered all these things in her heart.

[16 : 05] To ponder those things. Look back over there to Luke chapter 2 for a moment. In the midst of craziness, we find in verse 19, but Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Pondered those things. You know, the things that Mary would have pondered as they were walking through all these different challenges that were around them. You know? What are some of the things that you think Mary may have been thinking on?

What things do you think she was pondering? You know, the prophecies? I mean, you remember the angel came and said, hey, these are some things that were going to come to pass. You know? What else do you think she may have been thinking on?

Yeah? I mean, all the things that were taking place, there's a lot of them actually fulfilling the marriage. But it says Joseph knew her not until Jesus was delivered.

I mean, there's a lot of things to think about in this story, isn't there? Things happening and things going through. You know? From the time the angel first told her that she was selected to be the one that would bring forth the promised child, no doubt many of the things Mary pondered involved the prophecies, the warnings, and all that she and Joseph had experienced.

[17 : 18] I mean, there's a lot of things here to consider. But even yet, God took care in the midst of it, didn't he? There was hope. Because when we ponder on what God is doing, I think it brings hope into our thinking.

And, you know, because consider what are some of those prophetic messages from God that she might have been thinking on. You know, we talked about some of them this morning. Because you need to always remember, Joseph and Mary grew up and knew, had been taught.

They were in the synagogue. They were being taught the scripture. They were familiar with the Old Testament. You know? What are some of the passages you think she might have been thinking on in the midst of all this?

Yeah, I mean, there were some things that were presented there. You know? You know, you think about Isaiah 7, 14. What does it say? A virgin would conceive and bring forth a son.

I mean, you think about what the Bible says. There's some things that would be applicable to her all of a sudden. It's like, hey, that's just not, that's me. God's using this.

[18 : 31] You know, the angels encounter with both Joseph and Mary. I mean, I'll know that, how you would actually deal with that, you know, of actually having an angel come and speak to you.

Brother Don? What's that? Oh, when. Yeah. A lot of questions. Yeah. Because all this of what God was going to have, you know, think about where he says that Jesus is going to be born in Bethlehem.

It's not where they were, you know. How's all this going to come to be? And then when they get to the temple, remember when they dedicated Jesus, who were the two that were there? See, we're getting your Christmas trivia out here.

Yeah, you got Simeon and Anna that were there in the temple. And think about what Simeon and Anna told them. You only read through Luke chapter two.

I mean, they're glorifying God over Jesus that they brought in. I mean, talk about being welcomed. That they weren't maybe expecting for others to know or to understand what was happening and just the encouragement of it.

[19 : 37] And then the shepherds come and were there and the wise men all came to Jesus because of the heavenly messages and signs that told them of the Christ child. Have you ever thought about the conversation between Joseph and Mary and the shepherds when they got there?

It's not like you can just look up the quick dial. Okay, Joseph and Mary are staying over at the Hampton. You know, they'd have GPS locators and the shepherds knew exactly where to go to find them.

And you imagine when they walk in and say, hey, we're here to see the one the angel told us about. I mean, you think about the dynamics of all the women that talks about and Mary pondered all these things in her heart.

To consider what she had seen and heard and how these things were coming together. How's it going to be delivered?

He's born in a stable. We don't have any means. You know, there's a lot of elements. Like I said, when you begin breaking it down, there's a lot of craziness of life involved in it.

[20 : 39] And I think when we get all this going on in our life, we can learn something very important from Mary. That when life gets crazy, it's good to slow down and ponder some things in your heart.

To consider what God has done and what God is doing. You know? Now imagine as Mary sits there in Egypt with Jesus, you know, the very infant that was foretold and reflecting and meditating on what all might be in the future.

You know, we're not told that they knew what all was happening back home when they were away. You know, they didn't have Facebook, TikTok, or Instagram. I mean, there's a lot of dynamics happening and wondering.

And now there was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy that, you know, that Jesus, that Jeremiah predicted that Jesus would come forth up out of Egypt.

That Jeremiah 31 and verse 15 said that moms during this time were going to be weeping over the loss of their children. You know, all these things. But one more prophecy, and that was that prophecy that Jesus was going to be brought back to Israel following Herod's death.

[22 : 01] You know, this Old Testament prophecy he's referring to is from Hosea chapter 11 and verse 1. That out of Egypt I will call my son. In other words, all this was put together. God had everything planned out.

And it was accomplished because God's son was called out of Egypt. And since God is in control of all these things, we can say, just like Mary did as she pondered them in her heart, that there was hope.

There was things God was doing, things that God is working. You know, even in the midst of our crazy season, I want you to consider pondering what God is doing.

What God's done for you. To consider and really think on those things. Because why is it important to do that, you know?

Because do you face Christmas with optimism and hope? Or just the thought of how crazy it's going to be? Because sometimes we can get caught up.

[23 : 00] Because I want to encourage you to remember that Jesus came and gave grace to us and salvation to us. Not to make us feel guilty about having little to give or anything else, but the fact that what he gave.

You know, all the amazing things that happened when Jesus came to earth just illustrate that God orchestrated all this with you and I in mind. When God put all this together, he was looking down history and even saw you and I.

He did this for us. The fact that our God would achieve all those miraculous occurrences revealed to us that we can have hope. The same God who made sure not one jot or tittle was missing when Jesus arrived.

Everything was in detail and achieved according to his plan. You know, it's important that we know that no matter how out of control life seems, God is still in control.

Because Joseph and Mary, I think you can all agree, their life felt pretty out of control. You say, how do we know it felt out of control? When you list all those things that were going on in their life, I'll know about you.

[24 : 11] But if you were going through all those, your life would feel out of control too. But in the midst of that, we can have hope. You know, to grab a hold of what God is doing and to know that no matter what happens, God is still there.

God is taking care of those things in our life. And to relax a little bit, to take consolation that God's working all things out. You know, take a look over to Romans chapter 8 for a moment.

Romans chapter 8 in verse 28. You know, this is one of those things you see in the story of Joseph and Mary. You see this verse come to life.

And of all these challenges, these things happen. Notice what it says in verse 28. It says, And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are what? Called according to his purpose.

Were Joseph and Mary called according to God's purpose? Did they have some crazy challenges? But how did it all work out? All the things were what? For their good. God took care of those things.

[25 : 17] God took care of the details in that. And what we need to do with it. You know, the one big thing I hope that you consider this morning is that to thank and to reflect on even Christmas and what we celebrate and why we celebrate it.

You know, because there are times that the best thing we can do is slow down and consider what God has blessed us. Because instead of getting caught up in the craziness, to slow down and consider what God is doing and what God has done.

To do as Mary, to ponder them in your heart. You know, there are times the best thing you can do is to slow down even when everything's crazy. To step back for a moment and to ponder and to think.

Because the one thing you'll find, it'll help life get in perspective. Even in the midst of craziness, it'll help us to get things into perspective. And you know, this year maybe you and I can take a lesson from Mary because, you know, as a preacher, it's pretty crazy this time of year with a lot of things going on.

And we have a lot of things going on with people in church that are serious and you have different things happening. But you know, some of the things, the best thing we can do is stop and ponder some things in our heart about what God is doing.

[26 : 40] To stop and consider those things, to slow down, to learn to reflect and to meditate on God and who He is and what He's done.

You know, it'll take some time to stop and to just thank Him. You know, we went through Thanksgiving, but Thanksgiving isn't a day. Thanksgiving is supposed to be an attitude of our heart.

It's something that ought to be present with us. Thanksgiving isn't a celebration as much as it is a way of thinking. How we consider those things, to slow down from the frantic pace that often overwhelms us at Christmastime and enjoy the benefits of what Jesus brought, that the Bible says we can rest in Him.

You know, this week I just want to encourage you to take time to praise God for putting those things together in your life. Even if it seems crazy or upside down.

Remember some of the crazies and upside down things that Joseph and Mary faced. But yet in the middle of all those things, God was still over it.

[27 : 53] God was still watching over. God was still providing. To deal with what God has done for us. And to take time to praise God for that.

And even though you might consider that when you begin to ponder and to think on these things, you might find some things that you didn't even realize were there. As we put those things together.

So I want to encourage you this week. I know it's kind of crazy and things get to all sorts of different scheduling and conflicts and family and pressures financially and pressures with communication.

And I mean, you could name the list. The woes of people who aren't here and those coming and those not. But to stop and just ponder, Lord, what have you done for me?

All those things that God is doing in and through you. Because in that, I think we'll find that Christmas becomes a great time to witness exactly what Christ has done.

[28 : 56] You know, to stop and to consider those things. So, the preacher's going to buy back. I got 10 minutes extra or so. But no, I just want to take a few minutes today to consider just as Mary, in the midst of chaos, I want you to even consider there in Luke chapter 2 and verse 19 that Mary, in the midst of all this life turning upside down, took time to ponder and to think on what God was doing in our life.

Because I think it'd be a good benefit for us to do the same. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we come before you this morning, Lord, we just thank you and praise you for the day, for the opportunity.