

(Sunday 01/01/2006) – Holy Name Day – Luke 2:15-21 – The Name Above All Names’

***<sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.***

**That is what I want us to do this morning – to ponder the birth of Jesus, and to do so, not in our heads, but as Mary did, in our hearts. Not intellectually, not emotionally, not analytically, but with honesty, sincerity and a genuine desire to understand the import of the gift, the Son that was given, the child that was born, that day in a manger in a little town named Bethlehem, in obscurity in a stable. No other birth has had such an impact on the history of mankind. No one person has so influenced nations throughout the centuries. The birth of no other man or woman was heralded by a host of angels or foretold by prophets. The king of kings, the Lord of lords, the Son of the Most High God, the promised seed of King David, the Lord, the Savior of the world; born relatively unnoticed by the inhabitants of the very earth which He had created and now entered into as a man-child.**

**Remember, we are considering these things in our heart as Mary did, as finite created beings, flesh and blood, limited in our understanding of this world we have found our *own* selves born into, restricted in our capacity of knowing only a fraction of what is knowable regardless of where we live, when we live and how long we live. It is a certainty that we did not create ourselves, that we did not determine when and where we would be born, who our parents would be, and yet here, on that starry night, Mary was beholding her new born child whose birth *had been* pre-determined, had been specifically promised to mankind and who Himself, when He had matured to manhood, would respond to Pontius Pilate’s question regarding His birth, *‘Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth’* (John 18:37).**

**The angel had told the shepherds that he was bringing them good tidings of great joy, magnificent news for *all* of mankind. *‘For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’* As if the word of an angel and the proclamation of a host of angels was not enough, though not asked for, a further sign was given; the child would be born in the midst of animals, in a dirt filled stable replete with the scent of beasts, lying there in a feeding trough. That’s exactly what a manger is, a container from which**

cattle or horses or pigs feed. And yet, this child was acknowledged by the angels to be Christ the Lord, the very savior of the world. 9 months earlier, the angel Gabriel had told Mary that her child would be great, and called the Son of the Highest, that the Lord God Jehovah would give Him the throne of His father David and that He would reign forever and ever, and that His kingdom would have no end. But that evening, He lie there before her as a helpless infant, unable to fend for Himself, totally dependent on the loving care and nurture of His young mother, little more than a child herself. No wonder she pondered these things in her heart. And so must we.

Both Mary and Joseph had been told by angels that they were to name the child Jesus and so eight day's later, at His circumcision, He was officially so named. You shall call Him Jesus, *'for he shall save his people from their sins'*. Jesus, the Greek form of the Jewish word Yeshua or "Jehova-Savior". It was by divine decree that He be called by the name Jesus for that name sums up that for which He came into the world to do and which *only* He could accomplish. He, and he alone was born to be the divine Redeemer who by Himself could deliver men and women from the consequences and from the grip of sin. *'For He shall save His people from their sins'* – not from a life of meaninglessness, not from a lack of fulfillment, not from self-produced problems and troubles, not from poverty or credit card debt or lack of personality. Not to insure you get that promotion, or get accepted into the college *you've* chosen, or to win the lottery; not so you can enjoy a more abundant life than your heathen neighbor. No, He shall save His people from their sins. Not to change your situation, but to change *you* and your eternal relationship to the God of all creation.

And while we're on the subject, away with this notion of 'peace on earth' – that is not what the Holy Scriptures say. Yes, it is a noble thought, a grand notion to envision a time of peace between all men, a removal of strife, war and discord between our fellow beings. It is commendable that one would desire to pursue a life that was in perfect harmony with others who are also temporary inhabitants of this earth, but the attempt to accomplish this outside the realm of the reason for Jesus' birth and death, removed from His sacrificial atonement, is not only futile but it is a rebellious insult to, and denial of, the divine purposes of God in Christ, of why the child was born in the manger. The angels did not say 'peace on earth', that is what the world would

have you believe they proclaimed. That is a view that the merchants desiring to see the increase of their bar code scanners propagate around the time of year that He was born. That is what the non-believers seek without Christ, by their own efforts; world peace. The angels actually said "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men*" and that is a totally different thing altogether. In other words, since the fall of Adam, man has been at enmity against God, but now, with the arrival of the Messiah, the babe in the manger, God's angels are declaring to all men, although only some will respond, that *on earth peace*, that is, reconciliation between God and men of goodwill has arrived through this gift, this 'holy thing' that Mary has birthed. The literal translation is "*on earth peace among men of His good pleasure.*" To put it another way, "*peace to those to whom it pleases Him to give peace, whom He favors.*" If you want to know about peace on earth, the only place where Christ talks about it is in the following 2 verses and this is what He has to say: Matthew 10:34 - "*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword*" and Luke 12:51 - "*Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.*"

'*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace*'. First and foremost, as the angels knew, this event we are considering, the birth of our Savior, gives glory to God, He who is in the highest heaven. There is, as far as we know, nothing in all of God's whole creation, other than man, that does not glorify Him. But *in Christ*, the salvation of man shall glorify His name. Therefore, if man's salvation glorifies God, and glorifies Him to such a level that it causes the angels in heaven to praise Him - then *any* salvation message that is taught or that is spoken from the pulpit which glorifies not God, but rather man, cannot be *the* gospel. For salvation glorifies God. There may be some ministers that delight in preaching a doctrine that magnifies man and the works of man, that endeavors to promote the energies of the natural man, over the spiritual; but in their gospel angels have no delight. The only glad tidings that made the angels sing, are those that put God first, God last, and God in the middle in the salvation of His creatures, and places the crown wholly and solely upon the head of Jesus.

Yes, unto us a child has been born, but even more, a Son has been given, the Son of God, and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The

**everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. The mind can scarcely contain the thought – God Himself, *born* into our world as a man, that He might *die* in our world, as a man, that God Himself should bear our sins, our iniquities, and in so doing would be able to justifiably, as God, forgive those sins while at the same time exacting the utmost penalty that His holiness requires. His name shall be called Jesus; name above all names. No wonder Mary pondered these things in her heart. May God show favor unto you to do the same.**

... The Rev. Paul G. Stanley†