

**A PURPOSE TO OUR HOLIDAYS 2: AFTER CHRISTMAS**

*But Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. (Luke 2:19, NIV)*

**W**E'VE ALL DONE IT. The only prerequisite is two or three ugly shots in a row. Or maybe just one missed short putt.

What we've done is stand at the back of a tee box, staring into the distance and listening to the beat of our heart. It is the pose of the disconsolate golfer, and what he is doing is pondering the meaning of life. It goes something like this: *Why ever did I say yes those 25 years ago when my father said to me, "C'mon, you're gonna love it"?* They are aching thoughts, the mental equivalent of the reverberating throb that comes when you bang your shin against the coffee table in the dark of night. And did I say "mental"? Oh, it probably runs deeper than that.

Not all pondering is a weighty thing, thankfully, though the word suggests much more than a passing thought. The Greek for the word, which is *symballō*, is standardly translated as "ponder," and it means the gathering together of things. A person who ponders is said to confer with oneself, collecting their thoughts and sorting out what these could possibly mean on the whole.

Mary, we are told, did this sort of thinking after the events of that night we celebrate when Christmas comes. She took stock of the manger, the birth, the shepherds, the angels, and this child in her arms. She treasured these details and wondered deep within what they all could mean. Of course, Mary was not without some understanding. She and Joseph had been told that this child should be called Jesus, for he was to save his people. She had magnified the Lord for allowing a girl so humble as herself to be the chosen bearer of this child.

In this way, we are similarly advantaged to Mary. We don't know only the facts of the story but also its meaning. We were told of these things even in the years before we professed to believe. And now we take occasion to hear them and collect them again.

What will we do with the words and the music and the people we treasure this year? Will they only pass us by at a service or a meal, before we march on to the new week and the new year? If so, we will have let the opportunity to think well and deeply escape us. And that would be a shame, for this Jesus we worship has saved us to love him with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind.

**Opening questions** Do you find that the Christmas season causes you to think of things differently than you normally do? • How do you feel after Christmas is gone? Tired? Refreshed? Thoughtful? Ready to move on?

**READING** Luke 2:19-20; Matthew 22:34-38; Philippians 4:8

**Our pondering and our praise (Luke 19)**  
Compare Mary's response to the events of the night to the response of the shepherds. Who are you more like when an event greatly impresses you?

---



---



---

**All your mind (Matthew 22)**  
How often do you stop to think about who Jesus is and what he means to you? Would you say that you love him with all your mind? What keeps you from attending to him with your thoughts?

---



---



---

**Good thoughts (Philippians 4)**  
How might we train our minds toward better thinking by paying attention to the list Paul gives here? What specific thought do you want to leave this season with and carry into next year?

---



---



---

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/5SXCmMhM0Ao>