

Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Luke 2:1-20, 2016

Mary did you know?

This is a beautiful song isn't it? On the one hand it plays into our familiarity with the story of Jesus' life and ministry,

and at the same time pulls at our sensibility about this young girl who has become a mother at such a young age by our standards.

I think it also draws us back into the mysteries of having our first child and wondering,

what will this child's life be like, what will he do, what will she accomplish in her lifetime?

It may or may not resonate with you in one way or another, for one reason or other,

and there are those who say the song is ridiculous because it is biblically illiterate.

Some of this depends on how you approach the song in the first place.

Frankly, I like it for all the reasons I listed and because of the way it draws me into Jesus' story as I try to imagine what Mary may be thinking at this point of carrying out what God has called her to.

You remember it was an angel who came to Mary to give her the good news about this baby;

“Greetings favored one! The Lord is with you...you have found favor with God...you will bear a son, and you will name him Jesus... He will be great, reign over the house of Jacob forever,

and of his kingdom there will be no end...

The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy, he will be called the Son of God.”

Mary responds, “Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

So, Mary had been told and by all reasoning we can believe she should have known something about the future of her son,

and who this child really was.

When the shepherds came they told her all the things the angels told them,

“...to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”

and this amazed everyone.

But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

These shepherds, Mary, Joseph had all learned about the long awaited Messiah who was promised ages ago, and who they are still awaiting.

Mary did you know?

Sure, Mary knows something about this new baby boy.

Perhaps not all the details, but she has the big picture by now.

Even before Jesus’ birth, Mary wrote a song while she stayed with Elizabeth about what it means for her to bring this baby into the world.

It is called the Magnificat.

In it she expresses the honor, favor and privilege to have God active in her life in this way.

“My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

She grasps the implication for the generations to come who,

“...will call her blessed;” she says, “for the Mighty one has done great things for me and holy is his name...”

Mary did you know?

She may not have known the answers to all the questions in the song our band sung for us tonight,

But I think she had the big picture.

And we are pulled into the greater story, the story that is about more than the birth of a baby,

which no one would normally give any significance to,
particularly a birth that takes place the way this one did.

It is interesting, however that as you read through the rest of the story after Jesus’ birth, there seems to be those times of forgetfulness.

Mary and Joseph go to the Temple in Jerusalem at the appointed time for their purification,

and to present Jesus to the Lord at which time he would be designated as holy in accordance with the Law.

Simeon was there and the Holy Spirit rested on him.

In the rite he proclaimed Jesus as the salvation of the world,

a light to the gentiles and for glory to the people of Israel.

The passage says that, "...the child's father and mother were amazed!"

Mary, did you forget?

Much later in Jesus' life Mary and the family went out to restrain him after hearing from the people that Jesus had gone out of his mind.

He was speaking in a crowd of people Mary could hardly get through,

and had gotten into a debate with the scribes who were accusing him of having Beelzebul.

Mary, did you forget?

By the time Jesus hung on the cross Mary was acutely aware of what was going on in the grander scheme of things and certainly remembered the words of Simeon so many years before,

"...a sword will pierce your own soul."

This story of the birth of our savior operates at many different levels just as this song, "Mary Did You Know" does.

Mary did you know that your baby boy will walk on water, give sight to the blind, calm the storm,

make the deaf hear, the dead live, the lame leap and the dumb speak?

All of these things Jesus did during his ministry are the things that brought the kingdom of God into the world to change peoples lives.

to serve as a living sign of the reality of God on a level where you experience God's love for you and all his people,

a sign of God's faithfulness to ancient promises now fulfilled,

bringing salvation to all the world,

revealing the presence of God in this world still working to make your life one that brings honor, glory to him

while bringing his love, healing, peace, and justice to this broken world.

On another level, a personal level, perhaps these questions are for you to answer rather than Mary.

Did you know?

How do you answer these questions?

Do you know the story beyond the birth story?

Have you read about Jesus walking on water, giving sight to the blind, calming the storm,

making the deaf hear, the dead live, the lame leap and the dumb speak

Have you contemplated the existence and presence of a God who comes to you in this baby boy who

- has come to make you new and soon will deliver you,
- who walked where angels trod,
- who is the face of God come to rule the nations,
- heaven's perfect lamb,
- the great I am?

This is all for you.

¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:
¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

It isn't for just some shepherds in a field or the people who lived 2,000 years ago. This is for you.

At his last supper with his disciples Jesus will say,

Take and eat, this is my body given for you, this is my blood shed for you

And you will hear those words in just a little while.

From his birth to his death, everything he does is for you.

Martin Luther wrote in one of his sermons, "...you see clearly that Christ is born for us. For the angel does not simply say, "Christ is born," but "to you he is born,"

neither does he say, "I bring glad tidings," but "to you I bring glad tidings of great joy..."

It is for you that God poured himself into human form and came into the world.

So during this Christmas season let your lights shine brightly,
your gifts give deeply,

your gatherings be loving,

and all in the name of the one whose birth you
celebrate tonight and tomorrow,

Jesus Christ, your savior and Lord.

Amen