Pondering celebration

Luke 2.1-20

Jesus is born in Bethlehem and placed in a manger. Shepherds from the surrounding hills are summoned by angels to visit him. Amid the busyness of the angels celebrating and the shepherds hurrying to Bethlehem, we find Mary quietly pondering what Jesus' birth means. Busyness and celebration isn't wrong, but how can you still yourself, in the midst of the busyness, and ponder what Jesus – and Christmas – means to you?

Now read **Luke 2.1-20** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

The busyness of Bethlehem during the time of the census can mirror the busyness of our Christmas celebrations. It might seem that we need to be in a million different places all at once, but be careful to balance this out by taking time to consider the reason for the celebrations. Consider the calming and peaceful second part of this week's passage, and try and find moments to reflect on the awe and wonder that is Jesus this Christmas.

Ask yourself: How can you take time to ponder, with those around you, this Christmas time?

WALK

A popular Christmas Day tradition is to take a walk after dinner to get some fresh air and make some room for more chocolate! As you take a walk on or after Christmas Day, take note of all the beautiful Christmas lights. As you stroll, also look up at the God-given Christmas lights too – the stars! Try and imagine that you are a wise man following a star, or a shepherd on the hillside. How would you have felt, travelling to meet the new king?

CHRISTMAS DAY SPECIAL

Do you watch television on Christmas Day? Is there a film or TV episode that you always watch? After this or during the week, spend some time creating freeze-frames of some of your favourite Christmas Day celebrations and traditions, exploring how a Christmas Day special in your house might look! Think about how the day starts, which activities you do, and who you usually spend the day with.

WRAP THE PARCEL

After dinner, play a game of pass the parcel using clothes or pillowcases to wrap the gifts up – you may have already unwrapped them from their shiny paper. Use this to remember how Jesus lay as a baby, in such a simple place, and the importance of what is on the inside, not the outside. It's also a great eco-friendly way of wrapping presents and eliminating paper waste!

Angel Wings

Using Christmas decorations and any new gifts, make the shape of some angel wings on the floor. Lie down in the middle of them so it looks like you too have angel wings, to remember the heavenly hosts. You could use this image to send people as thank-you cards or use for next year's Christmas card!

CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

Before you tuck into your Christmas dinner, pull your cracker and as you do, say something which you are thankful for from the past year. After a year of ups and downs, it is important to try and remember the positives and praise God for them. You could use this as a way of saying Grace, a prayer before your meal.

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Pondering celebration Luke 2.1-20

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

The Emperor, Caesar Augustus, sent out a ruling that everyone in the Roman Empire should be counted. Everyone had to go back to their home town to be registered. So Joseph set out from Nazareth to Bethlehem in Judea, with Mary, to whom he was engaged, and who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for the child to be born.

Mary gave birth to her first-born son. She wrapped him tightly in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, in a stable, because there was no room for them at the inn.

In the countryside nearby there were shepherds, watching over their sheep. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of God shone around them. They were terrified, but the angel said, 'Don't be afraid. I bring you news of great joy – joy to be shared with everyone. Today, a Saviour has been born. He is the Messiah that you've waited for. You will find him wrapped in bands of cloth, lying in a manger.'

Suddenly the skies were filled with God's angels singing, 'Glory to God in the highest; and peace to God's people on earth'. When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'

The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem, where they found Mary, Joseph and the baby, lying in the manger.

Giving praise and glory to God, the shepherds told everyone what they had seen and heard, and everyone was amazed. As for Mary, she thought deeply about all these words and treasured them in her heart.

Luke 2.1-20

Luke 2.1-20 (NRSV)

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And 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.

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

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!"

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