

The visit almost always goes the same. A woman who has just had a baby almost always reacts the same way when visitors come by to see her little boy or girl. "Isn't she cute? How adorable that face is? Look at his little fingers and toes." Parents seeing their baby for the first time have smiles you can't wipe off their faces. New moms and dads in the few quiet moments likely wonder about the unlimited potential for their little one. They might ponder the feeling of pure joy at what they've gone through and amazement at what they face for the next eighteen years. And when they're turned loose from the hospital the child becomes their responsibility, their chore to raise, their privilege to watch grow up. "My son. My daughter." This child is their child.

Mary's thoughts maybe weren't much different when she laid eyes on her little one for the first time. She experienced the pain of labor like every mother in the history of the world. She felt the pain and probably screamed a time or two during delivery. And when it was over and the little guy was born she looked down and saw his cute little cheeks and baby face and smile for the first time. Can you picture Mary smiling? Why wouldn't she? This child was hers. "My son." But that's where things differed from every other mother. The promise of the angel was likely still fresh in her mind. Ever since she heard it, it probably was always on her mind. My son, my Savior.

Mary was told ahead of time it would be this way. This child would be special. So after the birth she had a holy reverent awe. **"Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart."** What was she pondering and treasuring? Maybe it was that just a couple of weeks before she was living in Nazareth. She was near ready to give birth when the news came she needed to go with Joseph 90 miles away to Bethlehem, something about a census. Even that maybe wasn't surprising. She knew God's promise about her baby. It may have caused her to remember old prophecies about God's promised one. **"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel."** That one was her son. It had to be Bethlehem. Mary could only be in awe of God's unbelievable timing and mercy to get her from Nazareth to Bethlehem so her son could be born exactly as God promised.

How could she not be in awe of what God was accomplishing? And that he was using her? How long people had been waiting? Now it was happening and she would be at the center of incredible events. But she was nothing. She knew that. It was God's grace that was using Mary. It was God's undeserved love that selected her for this privilege. How struck with awe she must have been? She was just another in a long line of sinners deserving punishment from God instead of his love. Sinners who grew tired of waiting for God's promises. Sinners who all died without actually seeing God's promises come true. But now that was different. Glory to God indeed. Yes, Jesus was her son, but he was also the son of God.

Of course it's important to hear that the Son of God born to Mary wasn't just for Mary and the people of her day. That was God's promise for you too. That shouldn't be surprising, but maybe it is. Just a couple of days ago I stood on a doorstep. I was there to welcome a newcomer to the neighborhood and I wanted to invite him to check us out. When the door opened I introduced myself like I always do. Normally people kindly take the card and magnet I offer, smile, and say thank you. This man smiled but didn't take my postcard invitation. Instead he stated he tried to follow the Ten Commandments. I countered with a smile and a verbal invitation to Christmas Eve worship tonight. Then he asked a surprising question. "What does Christmas have to do with the Bible?" After regaining some composure I answered, "We're celebrating Christ's birth." No, he shook his head. Christmas wasn't in the Bible. Jesus wasn't born in December. "That may be true about December," I said, "but the birth of Christ Jesus most definitely is in the Bible." Suddenly he didn't want to hear any more and the conversation was over.

Now I didn't handle that encounter smoothly. I probably could have asked questions, tried to probe deeper. But I was caught off guard. It did cause me to ponder things. Was he surprised the events we celebrate at Christmas were in the Bible or more surprised by what that could mean? I would have thought keeping the commandments would mean a person felt obligated to be in church on Christmas. Maybe feel guilty for not going. We know, because we know the Ten Commandments. Clearly says what to do and not to do. And when we try and keep them, like that man thought he was, we fail. We're condemned for doing bad things and breaking those commandments. Guilt comes naturally when we do something bad. We've all felt it. I have no doubt that man felt it. Guilt for a past of speeding and swearing. Guilt for having hated friends or saying mean things about them. We're guilty of telling stories to our parents we knew weren't true. We're guilty of heartbreaking divorces and devastating cheating. The more we ponder our sins the more we realize God holds us accountable for all of them. That might surprise us, catch us off guard. Ponder what it means: if the events of the Bible, like Jesus' birth, are true our guilt is real. We really deserve punishment and hell.

Mary may have been pondering her own sins too. Maybe it was lustful thoughts about her husband before they were married or someone else after. Maybe it was complaints against God while her belly grew with a baby she didn't plan for and pains she didn't enjoy. It could have been the fact that this unplanned pregnancy was wrecking her plans. Certainly her thoughts couldn't help but think about what the shepherds said when they arrived right after she gave birth. She probably pondered how they knew. But she knew why they were there. They must have told her. Angels appeared to them. Many angels, all singing praises to God. Singing because something amazing had happened. They came because Mary's Son was their Savior.

The humble looking face of her newborn son masked the reality the shepherds spoke of. The song of the angels confirmed the angel Gabriel's promise to Mary. **"I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."** What a relief Mary may have felt? It wasn't a dream. This was all real. God was working in the world. God come to earth. A Savior for the world. That humble looking son of hers was Mary's Savior too. She had given birth to the Savior God promised to send.

Mary's Son was the Savior of the world. He came to bring peace. God and sinners reconciled. Through the work of this child God would bring about peace. Peace on earth and goodwill toward mankind. This newborn's name was Jesus for a reason. The Lord saves, only in the humility of God made man. Only God come to earth could restore peace between man and God. Jesus would be perfect. Perfect so that at the appointed time he could make the payment. All sins would be placed on him though he had none. Carrying all sins he would give his life to earn forgiveness for all people. The world would be at peace with God through Christ Jesus.

Tonight the words of the angels can ring in your ears. Mary's Son is your Savior. You can claim him. He is my Savior. God saw your hopeless situation and came to your aid. See his grace in the baby Jesus of Christmas. See God's grace taking on human flesh to live a perfect life. See your Savior growing up to hang on the cross for you. Suffering and dying my Savior set me free, you can say. My Savior was my perfect substitute. It all began that night with a humble helpless baby boy born to his mother Mary and placed in a manger. Mary's Son is My Savior and your Savior too.

There is much joy surrounding this good news of great joy. You have new life with Christ Jesus as your Savior. You have new reason to live life knowing no matter what, God loves you. God sent Jesus for you. God empowers you through this good news to live a life of faith. Trusting in him you now have all new promises. Not promises of judgment but promises of being saved. Promises that you can leave here knowing your burden of guilt and sin has been removed in Christ. Walk away confident in the promises that through Christ your relationship with God has been restored. Sing with the angels, **"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."** You have God's favor. You are at peace with God. Mary's Son but your Savior.

Mary may have kept these things to ponder in her heart. But wouldn't she also share what happened? She watched as the shepherds hurried off to find people to tell. People who needed to know the good news. Mary pondered. Maybe selectively and methodically she found people to tell too. People she could relate to. People who were sinners, down on their luck, needing good news. She had the best news. Her son was the Savior. You have people you relate to. Sinners like you, people experiencing difficulty, someone who needs good news. People carrying a burden of sin and guilt. People ready to hear the gospel. Mary's Son is their Savior. Tell them Jesus was born for them. Tell them that Christmas is about Jesus Christ's birth. More than that Christ came to be the Savior. Their Savior. Your Savior. Mary's Son. My Savior.