

Our theme for today: Pondering

Have you ever pondered something? Meaning, have you ever thought something through, deliberated, evaluated, assessed something quite deeply? We all have, right? It's kind of like a conversation. *"What about this, what about that?"* But, have you done that in the midst of fear? What kind of conversation, what kind of pondering, if any, do you have in times of fear?

Scripture

'²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.' ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary..."

Luke 1:26-30

Thought provokers

- Mary is afraid, right? After all, the angel says to her, *"Do not be afraid."* What do you think Mary is afraid of? Strange men? Strange appearing men? The words of the Angel? What is she afraid of?
- What does it say to you when you read that the Angel calls Mary by her name? Anything noteworthy about that to you?

Reflections

Mary is afraid. I don't know how much fear she had; I cannot measure that. And, next, what is she afraid about? The context of the passage helps us understand why she is afraid: *"she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be."*

She was perplexed about the greeting! When Mary hears the greeting, *"the Lord is with you"*, she might have been so perplexed because of the knowledge that in Israel's past God was with the heroes of faith: Moses (Exod. 3:12), Joshua (Joshua 1:5), and Gideon (Judges 6:12). On hearing *"the Lord is with you"* it's most likely she was perplexed at some great work that God was about to do... with her!

Have you ever felt troubled when God has asked you to do some task, or work, or to take a step of faith? Perhaps you have a new situation looming and you know or sense that God is asking you to trust Him? Perhaps God is asking you to forgive someone or start praying with your family or give a full tithe – all of these things can stir within us fear. These are things that God asks us to do!

It's "natural" to feel fear, it's natural to be perplexed, but Mary shows us how to respond. She pondered! She thought through, she evaluated, she considered in her mind what had been said of her. She didn't internalize her problems by withdrawing nor shutting down, and neither did she externalize her problems by "acting out" or "lashing out" – she considered, she pondered what was said.

Fears can get the best of us. We can start to act in irrational ways, we can start to lean on the ways of the world, we can descend into sin. One of the most classic ways we operate is to just get busy and we state: "*Surely, God doesn't want me to do that? I know, I'll just get busy – that will please God!*" With such sentiments, what happens is we avoid thinking through what has been said to us. We avoid the pondering! We haven't learned how to ponder!

So, what of this phrase "to ponder"? What does that really mean? Did you know that the root meaning of the word is "*dialog*"? Even though Mary had fear, she had dialogue with God. Yes, she still had fear, but her thoughts were toward God. In response, God replied to Mary through the angel, "*Fear not.*"

How about you? Is God asking you to do something? I think He likely is. Do you have fears? You probably do! Are you pondering what He has said?

Prayer and Song

Take time to pray and sing praises to Him. Here is one we've provided by Adelaide Pollard.

Have thine own way, Lord!

*Have thine own way, Lord!
Have thine own way!
Thou art the potter,
I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after thy will,
while I am waiting,
yielded and still.*

*Have thine own way, Lord!
Have thine own way!
Search me and try me,
Savior today!
Wash me just now, Lord,
wash me just now,
as in thy presence
humbly I bow.*

*Have thine own way, Lord!
Have thine own way!
Wounded and weary, help me I pray!
Power, all power,
surely is thine!
Touch me and heal me,
Savior divine!
Have thine own way, Lord!
Have thine own way!
Hold o'er my being
absolute sway.
Fill with thy Spirit
till all shall see
Christ only, always,
living in me*