



# *The Westminster Pulpit*

Sermons Preached at Westminster Presbyterian Church  
3900 West End Avenue Nashville, Tennessee 37205-1899

***“What now?”***

## **Sermon on Luke 2:1-20**

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December 24, 2023  
Christmas Eve

*Luke 2:1-20*

**2** In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. **2** This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3** All went to their own towns to be registered. **4** 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. **5** He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. **6** While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. **7** 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 in the guest room.

**8** Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** 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: **11** to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” **13** And 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!”

<sup>15</sup> When 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." <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, <sup>19</sup> and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

Life might be defined as a series of "Now what's?" Like your Christmas bulletin, the sermon, the music, Communion, carols, and candles. Now what? Maybe a Christmas light tour on the way back home. Then an attempt to get the children in bed, then assemble the 153-piece Barbie Kitchen. Now what? A little TV. Now what? It's Christmas!

But life might also be defined by a series of "What now?"

I was remembering when my kids were children, and we would spend each December and January giving strep throat to each other. What now? Strep throat. What now? Strep throat. What now? You have mumps. Oh! Great.

I had a visit from my parents one summer, during which time my mom fell down the steps and broke a few ribs, and I had to take my dad to Duke where he had triple bypass surgery. What's next? This is what life is like! One thing after another. Floods, fires, tornadoes, your dad retired and bought a motorcycle. Now what? It's another election year! The hits just keep on coming!

Life can be filled with lots of "Now what?" and "What's next?."

Is it any wonder we need this evening to remind us that life isn't found in the decrees that come from emperors? Life is not found in the struggles of a three-day journey from Bethlehem. Life is not found in the fact that upon arrival, Joseph didn't think to make reservations. "What do you mean there's no room in the Inn?"

Life isn't found in what germs might be in this feeding trough we've made into a crib. Or that some kid has just arrived thinking a great gift to bring a tired mother and baby is a drum solo... "Ba rump a bum bum."

No. Mary tells us that life is found in a Word. She treasures and ponders the words of angels, "Do not be afraid." She treasures and ponders the words, "Unto us a child is born. Unto all of us a Son is given." She ponders good news and great joy!

Can we take our cues from Mary this evening? And not get caught up in the bad news, but treasure and ponder the Good Word that God so loved the world. That we love because God first loved us. That we're not alone. Emmanuel. That the past is finished and gone. Believe in the Good News! That all things are being reconciled through Christ Jesus.

Take a breath, dear people of God, and believe the Good News.

Treasure for a moment the people around you. Treasure the people who brought you up in love. What a gift!

Treasure and ponder your friends. What a gift they are! They know you and they still want to spend time with you. You're something else. And they're something else - God love 'em. They'll laugh at your idiosyncrasies. And you'll give them a call tomorrow and say, "What are you doing today?" They are such treasures. Treasure the salvation of friendship and grace.

Why don't you treasure and ponder the last compliment you received? Did you brush it off, this gift of love? If you did, treasure and ponder how you might give it back.

Treasure and ponder how easy it is to bring light into darkness. One kind act in the darkness can turn darkness to "Glory to God in the highest heaven." You have that in you!

Treasure and ponder a time when someone's grace saved you from your own stupidity.

Treasure and ponder your favorite Christmas. And then treasure and ponder all the people that made that day possible. Treasure and ponder that favorite Christmas and pay it forward.

Treasure and ponder that darkness is no match for love.

Treasure and ponder that hope is not lost. But with God, all things are possible in this world.

Treasure and ponder that with God, all things are possible in this world. Treasure and ponder how God might be at work in your heart. How might you let God's light shine from your heart? Treasure and ponder that every "Now what?" and every "What Now?" can be bathed in God's Good News! For unto us, a child is born. Unto us, a Son is given. Praise God!