

“DEAR 2020”

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Here we are! The end of 2020...

- Closing our “Decorate the Darkness” Series and the year...
- If it feels like 2020 was longer than last year, that’s because it was... leap year!
- We would love to be able to turn the page on the year and return to the normalcy that we long for, but we realize that isn’t the case, at least not as quickly as we would like.

So, what do we do?

- Though 2020 has been a tremendously unique year to say the least, what is not unique is the uncertainty we feel as we try to make sense of what God is doing in the world AND how He will use the experience of 2020 in this next season of life.

*(Vs.) 2nd Peter 3:17-18 ESV – “You . . . beloved . . . take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.
Amen.”*

Three times in Luke's gospel he mentions a profound biblical concept that is easy to skip over : one that can be difficult for us to be faithful to in our normal frantic world, and seem almost impossible to live out in the chaotic reality of 2020.

- But, that’s why it is so important that we as Christians live counter-culturally. We look to the Scriptures and ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate our way forward. We allow God to set the rhythm and the pace on his terms and in His timing, not the worlds...

We saw this concept present in the story that Danny told last week...

- In Luke Chapter 2, After Jesus goes missing in Jerusalem for three days, he is found at the temple by his worried parents, Mary and Joseph. They find him doing doctorate level discussion and theology with the temple priests, acting as if this were all natural. Finally, he returns home with his parents, and it says... (Luke 2:51)

(Vs.) Luke 2:51 ESV – And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

Subtle right? But that isn't the only place we see it... The use of repetition in the Bible usually emphasizes the importance of a person, theme, or event and looking for examples of repetition is a key tool for studying God's Word.

- We see it also in Luke Chapter 1... If you remember the angel came and visited the Priest Zechariah, and foretold of John the Baptist's birth and how the Lord will use him. Zechariah doubts this, as he and his wife Elizabeth were "advanced in years." In response to this doubt, the angel Gabriel took away Zechariah's ability to speak. Everyone is in awe as Elizabeth becomes pregnant and Zechariah still cannot speak. Just after John the Baptist is born, they go to circumcise and name him on the 8th day. Everyone is confused to hear that this baby will not be named after its father, Zechariah, but will instead be named John, as the Angel Gabriel had instructed. And at this moment Zechariah's "mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God." And it says...

(Vs.) Luke 1:66 - ⁶⁶and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.

- **In Luke chapter 2**, inside of our Christmas story. When an angel of the Lord visits the shepherds and proclaims the birth of Jesus, they go into town to investigate and see if it is true. They find Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus and share with them what they heard from the Angels, and it says...

(Vs.) Luke 2:18-19 - And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

"The biblical idea of treasuring something in your heart is the dual recognition that something of profound significance has occurred, AND that you don't fully understand its meaning."

- One of the descriptive words we hear of this concept is the word "ponder"...

Ponder - "To think about (something) carefully, especially before making a decision or reaching a conclusion."

Biblically, the place you do this is your heart...

- Let's look closer at the Hebrew word "heart" in the Old Testament, which is "leb."
- This term stands for the inner part of a person and refers to our will, mind, consciousness, emotions and understanding. It is seen as the driving force behind our character, decisions, words and deeds and is the place of knowledge, memory and reflection.

Let's take it a step further and look at the "heart" in the Greek New Testament. The Greek term is "kardia."

- It stands for the origin of our spiritual life and includes the emotions we experience, the thoughts we have, and our will in life. It also describes the center of our longings, desires and feelings.
- When we think about this concept, we have to remember that the heart is a place of both thinking and feeling. So, these words of God are being treasured in a place where they can be thought about and felt, and that takes time...
- **Jesus teaches us this too...** In Luke 10:27, Jesus quotes Deut. 6:5, where Moses says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."
- Any time, however, the Gospels record Jesus quoting this text, Jesus adds the word *mind*, which Moses didn't include.
- Here is one of many verses where the term "heart" appears in the New Testament:

(Vs.) 2. Corinthians 9:7 – *"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

"We cannot truly read the Bible without patient and rigorous engagement of our minds. That's probably obvious to us. But we will not have read it well, not as God intended us to read it, without eager, even relentless, engagement of our hearts. It requires more faith, effort, prayer, humility, vulnerability, and often time to read God's word with our hearts, but that's because the heart is precisely where God wants his word to land." – Jon Bloom

Sometimes we have to acknowledge that His word "has not fully landed yet," and that is ok...

- 2020 has not fully landed yet... how could it?
- So, in the meantime, we treasure these things in our heart.
- This though is an active stance... not simply waiting to see if some new revelation and understanding from God will suddenly appear, but wholeheartedly expecting it.

3 "Treasuring Prayers"...

- *Lord, humble me again with all that I do not know...*
- *Lord, teach me more about yourself than I already know...*
- *Lord, make what I do know more alive and real in my heart and life.*

Prayer turns theology into experience. Prayer is the way that truth is worked into your heart to create new instincts, reflexes, and dispositions.