

# Treasure in a Mother's Heart

Luke 2:19

Preached May 10, 2009

by Dr. Dwight Kilbourne

*But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*

**Introduction.** As we celebrate Mother's Day, 2010, we realize that the summer season is fast approaching. A good way to begin this sermon is with a humorous story. A young lad arrived at summer survival camp, carrying his belongings and an umbrella. The camp director asked the lad who had come to rough it, "Why did you bring an umbrella?" The lad responded, "Did you ever have a mother?"

There is no mother more famous than Mary, the mother of Jesus. (I wonder if she made Jesus carry an umbrella.) In some Christian traditions, she plays a significant role in theology and religious practice. Oddly, Mary does not get a great deal of written space in the Gospels. Beyond the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke, she is only mentioned a few more times.

In Luke, we have a brief glimpse into her life as a mother. In the early days of Jesus' life, Luke tells of some events. At the end of these events, he speaks of Mary *treasuring these things in her heart*. This morning please join me in looking at the *treasure in a mother's heart*.

## Treasures in the heart.

Few times are more memorable for a mother and father than the birth of their children. For Mary and Joseph, this was amplified because of the series of events surrounding the birth. Near the end of Mary's pregnancy, the couple was required to take the taxing trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem. When they arrived, they had a tough time finding shelter. They ended up in a place where animals

were sheltered. There Mary gave birth to her son.

While they were there, a band of shepherds came to see this child. They told Mary and Joseph that an angel had come and told them the Messiah had been born and they would find him lying in a manger. They shared how the angel was joined by a multitude of angels who were praising God. Luke shares Mary's reaction to these events: *Mary treasured these words and pondered them in her heart*. Mary stored the memories as a treasure in her heart.

One of the treasures mothers keep in their hearts is the memories of their children. Often when the mind no longer functions normally, a mother can still recall those valued recollections of her children.

As many of you know, my middle son will be married at the end of this month. As a part of our contribution to the wedding, we have been preparing a PowerPoint presentation of Nathan and Lynn's lives. (Of course, we did not know Lynn as a child but we do remember Nathan.) To see those pictures of Nathan and his brothers 20+ years ago stirs the treasured memories in our hearts and minds – a focused T-ball player hitting the ball or a lad sprawled out sporting his cowboy hat.

One of the older hymns some of us have sung is entitled: "Precious Memories." While one might call to question the significance of its theology, it does express true human sentiment. Listen to the chorus: *Precious memories, how they linger, How they ever flood my soul; In the stillness of the midnight, Precious, sacred scenes unfold.*

Nearly every mother carries in her heart precious memories of her children. If you ask her to share some of them, she is likely to do so.

The second treasure that Mary carried in her heart was the hopes and dreams of what her new son would become. A little over a month following Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph went to the temple to fulfill their religious duties as new parents. While they were there, they encountered a

righteous and devout man named Simeon. This man had a close relationship with God. Through the Spirit, God had informed him that prior to his death, he would see the Messiah.

When Simeon saw the baby, he knew Jesus was the One. He took Jesus into his arms and proclaimed: *"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel"* (Luke 2:29-32).

Imagine how Mary and Joseph must have felt when they heard this pronouncement. In their child lay God's salvation – both for the Gentiles and Jews. Simeon's words reinforced earlier revelations for Mary and Joseph. Before her conception, the Angel Gabriel had told Mary that her child would reign over kingdom with no end. He would be called the Son of God. When Mary held her baby boy, she dreamed of what he one day would become.

Luke 2 ends with the story of Jesus being left behind at the Temple when his family made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem when he was twelve. As they were returning home, Mary and Joseph realized Jesus was not with them. When they returned to Jerusalem, they found him at the Temple, talking with the religious leaders. Jesus responded to his parents' scolding with assertion that he had to be about his Father's business. The story ends with words that Mary *treasured these things in her heart*.

Here a mother saw the development of faith in her son. He was becoming who God had intended him to be. In her heart, she stored this treasure.

Most mothers carry the treasure in their hearts of what they hope their children will become. Most have dreams of their children having a better, fuller life than their own. Most have high hopes for their children. Those dreams may range from

escaping the poverty cycle to being a successful professional.

The treasure of dreams for one's children is very important because not only does it give a mother hope but generally if communicated to the children in appropriate ways, it serves to motivate them.

The third type of treasure Mary carried in her heart was "pain." After Simeon had shared about who Jesus would become, he addressed Mary with these words: "*This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.*" (Luke 2:34-35)

Simeon's second oracle warned Mary about Jesus' fate. While he would be the Savior, he would face opposition. Not everyone would be favorably disposed toward him. People would speak against him. Ultimately, Jesus would be crucified. In the Gospel of John, the evangelist writes of Mary being at the cross. Without a doubt, her soul was pierced there.

It may seem strange to say that part of the treasure in a mother's heart is pain. Yet nearly every mother who loves her children will carry hurt from time to time. The pain may come when a child is mistreated or rejected by others. The pain may come when a child has messed up and has failed. The pain may come when a child suffers. These pains are placed in the treasure chest of a mother's heart. They are both evidence of her love and stimulants to her love.

### **Pondering.**

Mary not only stored these treasures in her heart, Luke tells us she *pondered them*. She rehearsed the events and promises in her mind. She thought about them.

The act of pondering the heart's treasure has the potential of increasing its value. The emotion the treasures generate can make us laugh or cry. Giving serious thought about the treasures can take us to a deeper level

of faith and strengthen the effect of ministry we do.

In relationship to pondering, there are two key questions that are vital. "What does this mean?" Searching for meaning in relationship to what happens to our children or what we hope will take place is important. Attempting to answer this question moves us beyond mere experiences to meaning for life.

The second question is, "Where is God in all of this?" Coming to realize God is with us and our children through the good and the bad is critical. Having a sense of where God is taking us through these things is important as well.

Answering these questions is not easy. Often it takes time to understand or to have any clue to what the answers are.

### **Treasures are to be shared.**

Every treasure God gives to us is intended to be shared. God does not want any of us to hoard our riches but to bestow to others. Remember, we are blessed so we can bless others.

Good mothers share the treasure in their hearts with their children. Shared memories help children, youth and adult offspring to understand their heritage. While some may not seem to appreciate the history, it is important to all. In sharing memories, there can be a temptation to get trapped in the past or only share a few selected memories which may paint what happened in a too negative or too positive light.

Sharing memories is not only a treasure for family; it can be of great value to others. A sharing of "what happened" by a parent who has been there and done that can be a source of encouragement and challenge to younger parents. This is one of the beauties of our church life in that we have many who have had the experiences and can share. (I remember a seasoned mother who shared with Patty these words when she was trying to potty train one of our boys: "Have you ever met a 30 year old who was not potty trained?")

The sharing of the treasure of hope and expectation is vital to children. "This is what you can be" can inspire a child to achieve greatness. Balance is important here. Set expectations high but allow for falling short. Sometimes a parent's hope is different from the true gifts an offspring might possess. A parent may long for a gifted artist to be a heart surgeon even though he has no desire toward that vocation. Parents must discern where their children's gifts lie and set hopes in those directions.

Sharing the treasure of pain can bring healing in the home and hope for those outside the home. The appropriate sharing of pain has a way of binding hearts together. In the tenderness, we are drawn together. The treasure of pain shared with others can bring them comfort.

More than 20 years ago, tragedy struck the Brown family. Flu-like symptoms of their daughter turned into a life and death struggle with death being the victor. Betty, her mother, felt pain like few can imagine or appreciate. That pain lodged in her heart. Betty Brown did not keep this treasure within but consciously has shared it with others. She wrote a book, *Sunrise Tomorrow: Coping with a Child's Death*. For many years, she has shared with other parents who have lost children to death. Her treasure has brought comfort to many.

### **Invitation.**

This morning in concluding this message, I invite you to pause for a moment to do a couple of things.

- 1) Let us give thanks for the love and care we have received from our mothers.
- 2) Let each of us consider the treasures of memories, hope and pain we have in our hearts and how we can share them with others in positive ways.
- 3) Let us submit ourselves afresh to the God who loves us even more than our mothers.