

CHRISTMAS EVE graphic

SERIES graphic

MANGER IMAGE

<https://livinglutheran.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/istock-1038207940-960x526.jpg>

Part 1

At some point in our lives, we will be involved in circumstances that seem to **contradict** the character, promises and purposes of God.

→ HUMILITY

Part 2

You never know how **small, unseen, insignificant moments** may be playing a part in God's plans...And we often **overlook** these moments

Image of manger on one side of slide and this bullet point on the other side:

Initial thoughts (impressions & perceptions) are not always accurate.

Image of iPhone on one side of slide and this quote on the other side:

<https://cdn.images.express.co.uk/img/dynamic/galleries/517x/26078.jpg>

"There's no chance that the iPhone is going to get any significant market share. No chance." {2007, Steve Ballmer, the CEO of Microsoft}

Image of manger on one side of slide and this bullet point on the other side:

The manger must be thought about **correctly**.

We don't get to "correctly" **instantly**.

Luke 2:6-7

While they were **there**, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a **manger**, because there was no guest room available for them.

{one at a time}

Mary & Joseph are poor planners or bad parents.

God is uninvolved or incompetent.

Mary & Joseph are victims.

{come up one at a time; can be 2 slides if needed for clarity/formatting}

These (initial) impressions create (instant) emotions.

→ How we **feel** about something is a product of how we **think** about something.

Luke 2:11-12

Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be **the sign** for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a **manger.**"

Image of manger on one side of slide and this bullet point on the other side:

The manger must be thought about correctly.

We don't get to "correctly" instantly.

Luke 1:3

Having **carefully investigated** everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an **accurate** account for you, most honorable Theophilus ...

Luke 2:18-19

... and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary was **treasuring up** all these things in her heart and **meditating** on them.

→ *"treasured ... and turned them over in her mind"* [JP Ph]

People have this amazing ability to think deeply AND to choose what we think about.

Show picture of MANDO (my dog) – can you get pic off Beth's social media?

Matthew 6:25-27a

"Therefore I tell you: **Don't worry** about your life ... ²⁶ **Consider** the birds of the sky: They don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? ²⁷ Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying?"

Isaiah 55:8

"For My thoughts are **not** your thoughts, and your ways are **not** My ways."
This is the Lord's declaration.

2 Timothy 2:1-2,7

Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. ² You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses ... **Think** about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things.

Image of manger on one side of slide and this bullet point on the other side:

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Harder To Ponder (x4):

- 1) In our Information Age, we have made **information** more important than **wisdom & understanding**.

Proverbs 2:2-5 (NIV)

Tune your ears to **wisdom**, and concentrate on **understanding**. ³ Cry out for **insight**, and ask for **understanding**. ⁴ Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures. ⁵ Then you will **understand** what it means to fear the Lord, and you will **gain knowledge of God**.

- 2) In our digital world and with the pace of our lifestyles, we are **distracted**.

Hebrews 12:1b-2a (NLT)

... let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ² We do this by **keeping our eyes** on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith,

- 3) Our minds are often captivated by a **lesser story**.
- 4) Our "faith" can become more about "**what works.**"
→ Jesus/God is a means to an end vs. "**founder & perfecter**"

Lamentations 3:21a

... this **I call to mind**, and therefore I have hope ...

{bullets come up one at a time}

- Mary's mind was already **pre-loaded** with God's word → God's ways.
- Mary "**treasured**" → We must **test** our thoughts.

{all together}

What's happening ... to me? Around me?

vs.

How's my thinking ...?

{bullets come up one at a time}

- Recognize **ungodly and non-Kingdom** thoughts ... and then be able to “*call to mind*” something/Someone **greater**
- **Ponder** to the point of **praise**

Luke 11:27-28

As [Jesus] was saying these things, a woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the one who nursed you!”

²⁸ He said, “Rather, **blessed** are those who **hear** the word of God and **keep** it.”