

Luke 2:19
“Unplug”
Advent 4

December 18, 2016
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Introduction]

That is the way it is. We fill our lives with the biggest and brightest, the best.

At this time of the year:

- The biggest Christmas tree in the living room.
- The brightest yard display of the neighborhood.
- The best present under the tree.

And at any time of the year:

- The biggest house!
- The brightest diamonds!
- The best career!

God says, “Unplug!”

God says, “Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10)

Christmas has its entertainment side and its retail side,
but we have not come here to be entertained.

Although the children’s program was entertaining!

We are here on God’s business.

And God’s business is to call a halt

– you might say “unplug”

from all the busy-ness of our hectic lives and this hectic season

so that we might discover anew the good news of great joy!

The good news of great joy that was proclaimed

a long time ago to shepherds on Bethlehem’s field:

“Today . . . a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (2:11).

[Jesus Is Christ the Lord!]

We need to ponder this...

You and I have much to learn from Mary, the mother of our Lord.

What exactly did she “ponder” in her heart?

I can tell you what it was not!

Not those things many people have come to expect in this season:

- an extravagance of gifts and bright lights,
 - the sound of carols and the glistening of new-fallen snow
 - a turkey and a ham or even a goose...
- all these trappings lay far in the future.

No, Mary’s enchantment was not found in any of that.

Rather, what she pondered in her heart was that which had been spoken by the angel of the Lord to the rugged shepherds concerning her baby boy,
“Christ the Lord.”

She looked down at the tiny baby
wrapped tightly in swaddling clothes in his manger bed.

Could it really be...

Could it really be that the *Lord*,
the God of hosts,
who feeds all creation,
who opens up his hand
to satisfy the desire of every living thing,

Could it really be...

that he would take flesh within her virgin womb,
be born as a helpless infant boy?

“Good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Lk 2:10),
the angel had announced to the shepherds.

This was no pipe dream
or human speculation;
these words were from the very mouth of God.

Her firstborn Son was none other than... the Messiah,
the promised Redeemer,
God in human flesh and bone.

So Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.

[*God in a Crib—and on a Cross*]

You and I can do no less.

For when all is said and done,
there is nothing

NOTHING to say or do that could add the smallest luster to this day.

The most overpowering music or overwhelming light display,
the biggest, brightest Christmas show ever,
could never hold a candle to the simple wonder of a heart captivated
by our gracious God,
who loved the world so that he gave his only begotten Son.

When we could not go to him,
he has come to us wrapped in swaddling clothes.
God in diapers, here among us.
God in a crib—
and then some 30 years later, God on a cross,
made to be sin for us
that he might remove the curse of sin
and the sting of death forever.

[*Conclusion*]

“[W]hoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

That’s the biggest, brightest thing about Christmas.
Everything else will fade.

The glitz and the glitter will soon be packed away for another year.
The excitement of the season is fast fleeting.

Unplug.

Shut down your head and open up your heart
to receive the great glad news that Christ is born a child. Amen!

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, ...
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations,
for ever and ever! AMEN!