

# the QUIET collection



## for Christmas

### Day 8: Listen

*In the same region, there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid for behold I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all the people. For today in the city of David, there has been born for you a savior who is Christ the Lord. This will be assigned for you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly, there appeared with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased.”*

*When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, “Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.” So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph and the baby as he lay in the manger. When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this child, and all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen just as it had been told them.*

*—Luke 2:8-20*

This is the word of the Lord. I imagine those shepherds made quite a ruckus. Awe-struck and chattering, they arrived in a hurry and departed in worship. But Mary watched all this activity and in their midst, she treasured and pondered. Listening could look passive on the outside, but good listening is anything but. This word ponder here literally means to confer or discuss. She didn't do this outwardly, but invisibly. While her posture was quiet, her inner life was pondering, conferring, discussing these things. In the innermost part of her being in the center of her soul, she watched her life a story unfolding and she kept all of it close.

The shepherds had a communal and social energy, the buzzed excitement of a small crowd when they experience a miracle, and that was as it should be. But for Mary, this miracle had been quietly growing within her for months, had settled on the inside of her, had become part of her very body. She was an active listener to her own life and the life of her baby, the Lord. Being a citizen of heaven means living upside down. We already know the first are last, the last are first, the rich are poor, the poor are rich, the strong are weak, the weak are strong. The talkers will learn to listen in, and the quiet will confer on the inside.

Good listeners can change the world. I know this because they've changed mine. Communion as a kind of listening, we may come to the table, distracted and bustling on the inside, but the elements remind us of a different way to live, offering a different kind of food that comes from a different kind of kingdom, the original comfort food. We eat and drink and remember Christ, not just who he was on earth, but who he is within us today. Stumbling through December, jotting down the list, planning out social distanced gatherings, waiting to hear if our loved ones are well, hoping the packages arrive on time.

Communion is a reminder of what happened on Christmas, that God hears us and came down to be with us. The company of Jesus is stunning really. So how are you keeping his company today? How might you offer his company to others? May we learn from Mary what it means to bear witness to the growing life of Christ and to carry this life close to our hearts/ as others hustle around us, may we refuse to judge, scold or shame them. May we instead be a listening presence, with no agenda but love.