

A Ray of Hope

ACT 1 (Mary's home)

NARRATOR Today we are going to look at the Christmas story..... And we are going to do it through Mary's eyes.

It's night time now, and we are outside Mary and her mother's house in Nazareth a small village in Galilee.

(Mary and her mother are preparing food on a table, going in and out of the house as necessary)

(Joseph Enters from the left)

JOSEPH

Mary, Mary! Are you here?

MARY

Oh, Mother, its Joseph.

(Mary rushes to meet him and hugs him)

JOSEPH (sounding excited)

Mary

MARY (gushing)

Oh Joseph, where have you been? You are late today? I thought that I might not see you.

JOSEPH

You know I'm busy making a new table for us, I was out getting wood.

MARY

Oh, Joseph, I cannot wait until we are married.

JOSEPH (teasing)

We've only been betrothed a short time.

MARY

It's been weeks, months, it's been forever.

JOSEPH

We shall be married soon enough, and I will take you to your new home as my wife

(Joseph takes Mary's hands in his as they talk)

I have nearly finished the work, but the roof needs repairing and I need a new door. We must have a proper home.

MARY

Yes we must have a proper home, is there anything I can do

JOSEPH

We need new bedding, and some mats.

MARY

I have been working on the mats, I should have another one finished by tomorrow.

JOSEPH

We should be ready soon, the Lord willing.

(They look at each other for a few moments)

Well I must go, I'll come by the day after tomorrow

MARTHA

Joseph! Can't you stay and eat with us?

JOSEPH

No, I'm sorry, Martha, I promised the rabbi I would fix the door in the synagogue today and I have not been there yet.

MARTHA

You are a good son of David, Joseph. Go with God and may he bless you.

JOSEPH

And you as well

(He looks back at Mary, she throws her arms around him, kisses his cheek, releases him)

MARY

Good night my beloved. Come back to me soon.

(Joseph Leaves)

ACT 2 (At the bed)

NARRATOR

Later that same night, Mary and her mother prepare for Bed.

(Martha is standing and Mary is sitting looking out the window)

MARTHA

I'm tired Mary, I'm going to bed now

(She Kisses Mary on the top of her head)

Don't stay up too late

MARY (sounding distracted)

I won't

(Martha stops and turns once again to Mary)

MARTHA

What's on your mind, daughter?

MARY (pausing slightly)

I was thinking about Joseph - and being a wife.

MARTHA

Mary, Joseph is a good man. He'll be a wonderful husband to you. It will all happen in God's good time

MARY

I know, I thank God for my husband every night.

MARTHA

I know you do, you're a good girl, and you'll make a good wife. Goodnight Mary

MARY

Good night mamma.

(After Martha leaves, Mary kneels before her bed and begins to Pray)

MARY

Oh great Lord, God of Abraham and Jacob, look with favour on your handmaiden, for you have blessed me with a fine husband and I praise you oh Jehovah.

(Mary falls silent, still kneeling, and a white light appears and Gabriel stands before her)

GABRIEL (Spoken slowly and boldly)

Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.

(Mary shows a troubled face, and wondered at this greeting)

Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.

MARY

How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

GABRIEL

The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

MARY (Quietly and reverential)

I am the Lord's servant, May your word to me be fulfilled.

(The light fades and Gabriel is gone. Mary bows her head and we hear her say)

MARY

Yes Lord

ACT 3 (Mary's home)

NARRATOR

Two days later, outside Mary's mother's home.

(Joseph enters as before)

JOSEPH

Mary! Mary!

(Martha gets up hearing Joseph's voice)

MARTHA

She's not here, Joseph

JOSEPH

Not here? Where has she gone?

MARTHA

She left early this morning to visit her cousin Elizabeth. She is with child and Mary went to see her.

JOSEPH

How long will she be away?

MARTHA

I'm not sure Joseph, She left rather quickly.....Elizabeth lives in Judea.

JOSEPH

She went to Judea?

MARTHA

Elizabeth is in her six month. It is a miracle from God that she is pregnant.

(Joseph looks sad and dejected)

But what does a man understand of such things? Don't look so sad Joseph. Mary will return in the Lord's good time. Besides, you mentioned that you were busy. You still have to prepare your proper home.

JOSEPH

You're right, I'm surprised that Mary would rush off without telling me.

MARTHA

Do not fear, Joseph. Mary is a good girl. When she returns, you'll be ready to take her home as your wife
(Joseph smiles, nods and then leaves, Martha watches him and then turns and gazes in the other direction)

ACT 4 (Judea)

NARRATOR

Join me now as we visit the Judean Hill country at the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

(Mary enters the house)

MARY

Elizabeth, Elizabeth, its me Mary.....Hello

ELIZABETH

Oh Mary!

(As she approaches Mary, she speaks in a loud voice)

Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!

(Mary open her arms wide)

ELIZABETH

Oh, Mary, Praise God, My soul soars within me, and my baby will not be still.

(They sit together holding hands, whispering and laughing)

ACT 5 (Mary's home)

NARRATOR

Once again we observe Marys home, it is approximately three months later and it is early evening. Joseph and Mary are sitting alone, talking earnestly. But there is tension in the air.

MARY *(holding Joseph's hand)*

The night before I left, when I was praying and praising the Lord, a bright light lit up my room and a voice said "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you" and when I looked up there was a figure of a man, but he was all in brilliant white, like his garment was made of light. At first I was troubled but then he said "Do not be afraid Mary, you have found favour with God."

JOSEPH

He called you by name?

MARY *(Nodding)*

Yes, then he said "You will conceive a child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

JOSEPH

Jesus? Son of the Most High?

MARY (Nods)

Yes, then he said "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever and his kingdom will never end."

JOSEPH (Voice filled with doubt)

The throne of David. His kingdom will never end. Mary, do you know what you are saying?

MARY

Oh Yes, Joseph, I do. And I said to him, "How can this be since I am a Virgin?"

JOSEPH (Jumps to his feet)

Oh Mary.

MARY (Speaking urgently and rushed)

No, Joseph, please listen. He said "The Holy Spirit will come upon you ----"

JOSEPH

Mary? The Spirit of God?

MARY

Yes, yes. So that the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God?

(Joseph is now speechless and stares at Mary for a while, he then shakes his head and turns and leaves.)

MARY (crying out after Joseph)

Joseph! Joseph!

ACT 6 (At the bed)

NARRATOR

We now join Joseph later that same night as he struggles with his news.

JOSEPH (Pacing the floor)

Oh, Lord. God of Abraham, God of Jacob, what am I to think of this? Mary, my betrothed, returns to me to tell me she is pregnant, that a messenger of the Lord came to her and proclaimed she will bear God's son. How can a virgin be pregnant? How can a woman bear a child without having known a man.

I have not touched her, Lord, You know that I have not. I have honoured our vows and your laws, Oh Lord. I am blameless. I have not sinned, my God against you or against her.

(Joseph falls to his knees)

How can I take Mary as my wife now? The sanctity of our betrothal is ruined. Our home would be impure, our marriage would be an affront before your eyes, Oh Lord

(Joseph cries out in anguish, placing his head in his hands)

My heart breaks within me. My soul hurts with grieving. What am I to do Lord? What can I do that I not offend your righteousness, O God? Please, Lord, have mercy on your servant. I will not depart from following your law. I will do what your righteousness demands, but deliver me from this sorrow, oh Lord. I am desolate and desperate for a word from your mouth, oh God.

(Joseph gets up and begins pacing again)

Act 7 (in front of bed)

NARRATOR

We are now at a rabbi's house the next day, Joseph and the rabbi are talking intensely....lets listen in

RABBI

I can see that you haven't slept Joseph. Are you sure you don't want to tell me the reason why you want to do this?

JOSEPH

I really don't want to say, Rabbi. I want to do this quietly.

RABBI

People will find out Joseph. A certificate of divorce is a serious matter.

(Joseph nods)

I cannot imagine what Mary could have done to bring you to this point. She's always been a sweet girl, with a sweet spirit. Perhaps a bit different, but always upright.

(Joseph says nothing)

Well, I've known you even longer. I know you are a righteous man, Joseph, and I know that you fear God, and wouldn't purposely break his law – so I respect your reason, whatever it is

(Joseph is silent)

The law is clear, Joseph. If you wish to end your betrothal and stop the marriage process, you must present Mary with a certificate of divorce in the presence of two witnesses.

JOSEPH

Must there be witnesses

RABBI

You wish to protect her from her shame, from public humiliation, is that it?

JOSEPH

Yes

RABBI

It can be done privately, but you still must have two witnesses present. This is what the law says.

(Joseph nods)

JOSEPH

I understand

RABBI

Joseph, Be very sure of what you are doing. Seek the Lord's will. Woman seem strange and their ways are mysterious to men. Be sure of what you are doing.

JOSEPH (Pauses thoughtfully then)

Thank you Rabbi

(The rabbi places his hand upon Josephs head)

RABBI

Go with God, Joseph. May he bless you, Son of David.

ACT 8 (At the bed)

NARRATOR

We return to Joseph's room. He is asleep, but dreaming.....

(Gabriel appears and approaches Joseph, he lays a hand on Josephs shoulder. Joseph stops moving)

GABRIEL

Joseph, Son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, for what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you are you give him the name Jesus, for He will save people from their sins.

(Gabriel leaves, and Joseph awakes, he sits up and looks heavenward)

JOSEPH

Yes, Lord, I will do as you say

(Joseph lays down again)

ACT 9 (Mary's home)

NARRATOR

It is the following morning and here we are outside Mary's home, and we watch as Joseph approaches.....

JOSEPH

Hello? Mary? Mary Where are you.

(Mary comes out of the house)

MARY (hesitatingly)

Joseph?

JOSEPH (holding his arms out tenderly)

Mary

(Mary runs to Joseph)

MARY

Joseph, oh Joseph

JOSEPH

Mary, the Lord's messenger came to me in a dream last night. I know the truth. He spoke it to me. I want to be your husband. I believe you. I believe the Child in you is the Son of God.

MARY

I'm so happy. The Lord is so good to us.

JOSEPH

Yes, he is, and his son will bless all people forever.

NARRATOR

And so Jesus was born that first Christmas morn. Born in a stable; laid in a manger. Shepherds came to worship him. Wise men from the east brought gifts to honour Him. And wise men still seek Him today.

Imagine yourself at the manger.

Imagine all of the honour that was there for Jesus. All of the worship. Joseph finally realised what an important role he had in caring for the baby Jesus. And Mary pondered in her heart. I am the mother of the Lord. His name is Jesus. He will save His people from their sin. The angels.....; the shepherds....., the wise men....., the animals..... All honouring the new born King.

(Cast comes to front down the aisle with Mary carrying baby)

NARRATOR Closes in prayer.