

## MARY'S STORY

The Christmas story told by Mary.

“Have you heard from Jesus?” asked a cheery faced Jewish woman of middle age, as she stood at her neighbor’s door in Nazareth of Galilee, and Mary replied sadly, “Not a word, and it will be six weeks tomorrow since he left home. His youngest brother, Simon, saw him baptized by John at the Jordan River. Someone saw him going toward the wilderness after his baptism in the Jordan.”

Mary was sorely troubled about her son, and Rachel who had been her friend from childhood tried to comfort her. “Surely he will be coming soon. He may have gone to Jerusalem,” she said, “or John the Prophet may have sent him on some errand, or perhaps he went to some quiet place for meditation as he often does. I hope he will be home soon.” Thus Rachel comforted Mary. Together they walked down the village street and on beyond to a quiet place on the hillside where they often came to talk together.

“I tell you, Rachel,” said Mary, “I am greatly disappointed in Jesus.” “Why, Mary!”, said her friend, “He has been so good to you! You! You are the envy of every mother in Nazareth. Jesus is so kind and good.”

“I know”, replied Mary, “but let me tell you the story which I have carried in my heart for thirty years. I often spoke of it to Joseph, but since his death I have been lonely and troubled, and I must tell someone the things that are in my heart. You are my best friend and you will understand. When we were young girls together, Rachel, you remember how we were taught to pray daily for God’s blessing upon our people, and to ask that the Messiah should come quickly. I hoped I might be the mother of the Messiah for I remembered that the royal blood of David was in my veins.

One evening, as I prayed, an angel stood before me. He said I had found favor with God, and that my son should sit on the throne of David. When I told Joseph about it, I found God had spoken to him also, saying that we should name the child Jesus because he should save people from their sins.

I remember the day when Joseph told me that he had to go to Bethlehem to be registered according to the edict of Caesar. He was angry about it, for it was a long, toilsome, and expensive journey, and he said it meant higher taxes and harder times for us. But my heart leaped with joy, because I wanted very much to go to Bethlehem. It was David’s city and I wanted my baby to be born there. I remembered that the name of Bethlehem had been associated with the prophecies of the Messiah’s coming for a thousand years. Joseph said it was quite impossible for me to go. And many times I regretted my rashness on that long, hard journey. It took me five days and I was so weary. It was night when we arrived. I was ill, and there was no lodging place to be found in all the city. We went from house to house seeking shelter. We tried the inn but

there was no room. Finally in desperation we took shelter in a stable. That night my baby was born.

A wonderful thing happened in the morning. I heard men's voices outside the stable. They wanted to come in, and when they entered they were very quiet and a look of reverent wonder was on their faces as they saw my baby boy. They were shepherds, and they said they had heard angels singing in the night, and the angels had told them that Christ was born in the manger to which they came. The shepherds knelt quietly beside me and seemed to be worshipping my son!

A few days later I had other visitors, three strange princes, who came from far away, saying they had been guided by a star to where a new king was to be born. And they, too, knelt down and worshipped my baby, and poured their treasures before him. It was all so beautiful, and so wonderful! I have kept these things in my heart for thirty years, Rachel, but nothing has come of it after all.

My son was to have been a king. He is only a carpenter. He was to have ruled. Instead of that he is everybody's servant. He was to have brought peace on earth, but violence and oppression surround us. He was to have been the Son of God, but he seems just like any other person in the village."

The two women sat long in silence. Rachel knew not what to make of such strange tales, and Mary's heart was troubled and perplexed. After awhile, she spoke again. "I will keep on believing and trusting. The telling of my story has brought assurance to my soul. My son is Israel's Messiah. Perhaps he is not to rule by force, but by love, and if that be so, there is no one so well qualified as he. Perhaps we must go the way of suffering and sorrow. I was reading today the prophecy of Isaiah about one wounded for our transgressions, a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. Can it be my son?"

Forty years later, Luke, the beloved physician, was writing a book of memories about Jesus. He came to Nazareth to gather material for his story. Rachel, now an old woman, told him what Mary had told her, and Luke recorded it in his gospel.

And at every Christmas time the world over we read in our homes and in our churches the story of Mary, and the angels, and the child that was born in the manger of Bethlehem.

O come, let us adore Him!  
Christ the Lord!

Rev. Wayne Sears Snoddy, BIL  
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