

Joseph and Mary-Great Expectations

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Scene One In Joseph and Mary's House

Joseph Hello, Mary

Mary Hello, Joseph. We're having fish for supper.

Joseph Good. I like fish.

Mary It's a good thing. People living by the Sea of Galilee eat a lot of fish.

Joseph Someone has to keep the fishermen in business.

Mary Yes, especially since we're related to half of them. (pause) My goodness, some of these bones are so small. Even the big fish have some tiny bones ...I wonder what it's like to be a fish. It must be beautiful down there in the water. I wonder if the fish know it's beautifulHmmm...I wonder....

Joseph That's one of the things I like about you, Mary-your wondering. You have an imagination.

Mary Perhaps too much of one sometimes. How was your afternoon, Joseph?

Joseph It was good. I finished the table for Nicodemus.

Mary Are you pleased with it?

Joseph It's beautiful. It helps that I started off with an excellent piece of wood. A good piece of wood already has what it can become in it -a chair leg or a table top. God has made me able to look at a piece of wood and see that. All I have to do is bring out what's already there for everyone else to see it.

Mary I wish I could do that, Joseph.

Joseph Oh, Mary, you have plenty of talents of your own.

Mary Thank you, Joseph. Well, the table turned out well. But you look tired. Is anything wrong? Are you well?

Joseph I'm fine. I'm just worried.

Mary Oh. What are you worried about, Joseph?

Joseph The same thing I've been worrying about for some time now.

Mary You mean the census?

Joseph Yes, the census.

Mary I've been worried about the census too.

Joseph You have?

Mary Yes. Well, I've been wondering Well, I'm worried . Well, do you remember, Joseph, what the rabbi spoke of recently in synagogue? He talked about King David and about how once David wanted to conduct a census. You remember he wanted to count all the men of fighting age in Israel. And the Lord said NO. The Lord wanted David to trust in Him, in the Lord, not in how many men he could use in his army. But David did it anyway, and the Lord punished him. Well, I've been wondering about that. Do you think it would be wrong, Joseph, for us to obey the Romans and participate in this census?

Joseph Mary, two things-In the first place, the people who obeyed David did no sin. The sin was David's.

Mary Yes, well

Joseph Secondly, and more important, the Romans don't know the Lord. For David it was a sin because he knew God and for him, it was an issue of trusting God. But the Romans don't know the Lord, and He is not holding them to the same standard.

Mary Oh, yes! The Romans have no relationship with the Lord, so there is no issue of trust here and therefore no sin.

Joseph Yes.

Mary Oh, Joseph, I'm so relieved. Thank you. Well, let's eat, then.

Joseph Mary

Mary Yes?

Joseph That's not what I was worried about.

Mary It's not? I thought you said you were worried about the census.

Joseph I am. But what I'm worried about is YOU and the census.

Mary Me?

Joseph Yes. It is a 60 mile walk each way to Bethlehem.

Mary I like to walk.

Joseph Mary, I mean in your condition. You should not be walking far at all.

Mary Oh *(lays hand on belly and looks thoughtful)*

Joseph God has given me the job of taking care of you and the baby. And it is not only the walking. The Lord will have to do another miracle and have this baby come either very early or very late, or I fear you will have the baby along the road somewhere.

Mary What do you want me to do, Joseph?

Joseph We have relatives and friends here who can watch after you and help you if the baby comes. Stay here with them. By myself, I may be able to make the whole trip and be back in about two weeks-before you know it.

Mary *(slowly)* If that is what you want me to do, Joseph, I will do it.

Joseph Good. I feel better. Now let's eat!

Mary Joseph

Joseph Yes, Mary?

Mary Well, I was wondering

Joseph Yes, Mary

Mary Well . I understand what is on your mind and I am glad you are trying your best to care for me and the baby ...But if the baby came while you were gone, I would feel so lonely. I would be sad. I know it might not be that important, but I would so much like to be when the baby comes-with someone who understands who this child is. My family is kind enough, but I don't think they really believe ...Well, you know, I've seen an angel...And you've seen an angel ...But I don't think anyone else in Nazareth has seen an angel. Only you understand. When I'm with you-no matter where we are-I feel safe because I'm with you, and you understand.

Joseph So, you think the stress of having the child here without me would be greater than the stress of walking all that way ...Hmmm...I hadn't thought about that ...Alright, Mary. You may come.

Mary Oh, Joseph, I'd rather have the baby along the road if you're with me than at home or anywhere else without you. Thank you.

(reaches out and takes his hand)

Joseph I love you, Mary.

Mary I love you too.

Joseph Well, that's settled. Now we can eat.

Mary Um . . . Joseph Joseph I was just wondering

Joseph Yes, Mary?

Mary You haven't delivered your table yet, have you? Could I see it before we eat?

Joseph Yes. I'm always glad to show my work to someone who appreciates me.

Mary Oh, I do!

Joseph Come on.

Scene Two
In Mary and Joseph's House

Joseph Hello, I've just finished closing up the shop.

Mary You've been working hard at tying up all those loose ends. I know.

Joseph My cousin Eli agreed to look after the shop and house while we're gone.

Mary Good.

Joseph I suggested that if anyone comes to Nazareth for the census and taxing, that he could rent the house to them. I urged him to keep the rent said it would make me feel better about him taking care of things for us.

Mary What a good idea, Joseph. And I suppose there just might be a few people who will have to return to Nazareth. Not many, perhaps (most people born here, stay here), but there may be a few. You know one has arrived already-staying with Simon, one of his relatives I never knew he had.

Joseph And there's a surprise. Eli insisted that we take his donkey on our journey. Wouldn't let me refuse.

Mary Oh, Joseph, that's wonderful! The donkey can carry our things!

Joseph And he can carry you.

Mary Oh, yes, I hadn't thought of that. Hmmm . . . the the baby's first donkey ride. I wonder ...do you think the baby will know that he's riding a donkey? I wonder what he does know? The son of the Highest, the angel saiddoes he know everything already? Or does he know things just the way any baby would? I wonder ...No, it's too Much even for me to comprehend ...I'll just ponder this one.

Joseph I wonder too I wonder about many things these days. And, I wanted to tell you, Mary, because you'll see it soon enough ...I'm bringing most of my tools with me.

Mary What? Why?

Joseph Well, as I was closing shop I had a feeling that I wouldn't be seeing it again for a long time.

Mary Oh, Joseph!

Joseph No, no. It wasn't a feeling that I'll NEVER see it again. I felt I should take some of the tools with us anyway. You never know when I might be able to use them to earn a meal or a night's lodging.

Mary That's true. There's bound to be an innkeeper or housewife between here and Bethlehem that needs a chair fixed or a shutter mended. Well, Joseph, if you feel the Lord is urging you to bring your tools, then you are wise to bring them.

Joseph I'm not sure it's the Lord.

Mary Well, you are not one to 'have a feeling' lightly, Joseph. And at any rate, the Lord has provided you a donkey to bring those tools! Well, I'm almost done making my preparations. The packing is easy just a few clothes and extra blankets. And I did bring cloth for swaddling clothes just in case ...All I have left to do is make the journeybread. I'll do that tomorrow.

Joseph Good.

Mary Well, I do love to travel. I have always loved the trips my family made for Passover. I wonder who we will meet on the road. I always love to watch all the people, all the faces, we'll meet and pass all sorts-well, not robbers-I don't want to meet any of them-but everyone else. All the new places. I do like to travel. I wonderDo you suppose Abraham like to travel?

Joseph Mary

Mary Well, like it or not, our people have certainly had to do a lot of travelling. And so often called to leave all of a sudden, at a moment's notice. The Lord called our father Abraham quite suddenly to leave his home city of Ur and go to a new place. And our people had to leave Egypt all of a sudden-ate that last meal standing up.

Joseph And the journeys often lasted longer than expected. Why, Jacob spent fourteen years when he left suddenly to escape his brother Essau.

Mary Well, I don't know that Jacob left home at the Lord's command-but I suppose you're right that he never expected to be gone as long as that. Hmm...if you have a feeling we'll be gone longer than expected ...you don't suppose we'll be gone fourteen years, do you?

Joseph No. I don't need to be away fourteen years. I already have my Rachel.

Mary (shyly) Thank you .. *(teasing)* And I hope you won't pick up any Leah's along the way.

Joseph No indeed.

Mary Well, did you bring the donkey home with you?

Joseph No, not yet. Want to walk with me over to Eli's to fetch him?

Mary I'd love to. I did say I like to walk.

Scene Three
On the Road

Joseph Well, Mary, you said you like to walk. Like to change that opinion?

Mary Oh, I still like to walk. I'm just coming to appreciate the beauty of sitting. On something other than a donkey. Not that I don't appreciate the donkey.

Joseph Well, did you enjoy the drink?

Mary Yes, it's a good well. This is a good place to camp.

Joseph I hope you'll get a good night's sleep tonight. I sure blew it last night.

Mary Oh, Joseph, you couldn't have known.

Joseph Oh, yes I could have. When you camp next to somebody with five dogs, you should know you're not going to get a good night's sleep.

Mary Well, at least there weren't any robbers last night.

Joseph Oh, Mary, you find a silver lining on every cloud.

Mary Well, at least a consolation prize anyway.

Joseph I sure don't feel like a good leader.

Mary Joseph, you're a good man.

Joseph Aw, I'm just a nobody carpenter from Nazareth.

Mary Now, Joseph, carpentry is an honorable trade. And you're good at it.

Joseph Alright. Carpentry is an honorable trade, and I am good at it.

Mary Besides that, you're not a nobody. You're of the house and lineage of David. You are the son of a king.

Joseph Aw, Mary

Mary Don't you "aw, Mary" me. It means something. And, you know, you told me the angel greeted you that way. He said, "Joseph, you son of David..."

Joseph That reminds me of another mistake.

Mary What do you mean?

Joseph Well, Mary, I was about to put you away quietly.

Mary But, Joseph, in your situation, that was the best thing you could have done. Why, you could have made a public spectacle of me, humiliated me

Joseph No, I couldn't have.

Mary Why, you could have had me killed.

Joseph No, I couldn't have done that.

Mary You would've been within your rights to do it. Many men in your position would have. I'm alive today because you DIDN'T do what many men would have. This baby is alive because you DIDN'T do what many men would have done.

Joseph Mary, I should have known, should have trusted you

Mary Joseph, how could you know? Have you ever seen another baby come about in this way before?

Joseph No. And if the angel hadn't appeared .Mary . (pauses, sighs) you have no idea how it made me feel when you showed up with child.

Mary I have thought about that Joseph. I wish all this could've happened in a way that you wouldn't have had to go through that.

Joseph Mary, I don't mean Mme." Well, there was some wounded pride, but mostly ...Mary, I always thought you were one of the best people in the village. Good, sweet, pure. And then when I was presented with evidence I couldn't argue with, that I was wrong about you ...I was crushed. If even you, Mary, weren't the sweet person you appeared to be, then maybe there just weren't any good people in the world.

Mary Oh, Joseph, but when the angel spoke to you, you did a brave thing. You married me.

Joseph The angel was the scariest thing I've ever seen in my whole life. You think I wouldn't do what he told me to do?

Mary *(laughs)*. Angels are pretty scary. *(changes tone)* But, Joseph, after the angel left ...well, our people have often seen something wondrous or terrifying from God, but as soon as the scary thing is gone, they forget, do what they'd ordinarily do. You didn't. You took me in and protected me and the baby. Joseph, don't you understand what this means to me? You saw an angel, but the rest of the town didn't. When you married me, in their eyes you were marrying a tramp with a wild story. In their minds they must imagine that you were fooling around too ...or that you were a pitiful and foolish enough man to marry such a woman anyway. I know the sorts of things they have been thinking and saying about you. You took it on the chin for me, for the baby. And I will probably be the only one who will ever know. You mean more to me than any conquering hero.

Joseph Aw, Mary. It's nothing.

Mary It's not nothing.

Joseph The things that people say, that's nothing compared to knowing that you really are the person I always thought you were.

Mary Oh, Joseph, I'm not that wonderful.

Joseph Oh, yes you are. And I'm not the only one who thinks so. Why, you found favor with God. That's not easy to do.

Mary *(smiling)* Well, that was a gift. And besides, He picked you too. And it's no wonder. Who else would He pick to raise His child but somebody who would be brave and give of himself?

Joseph touches her cheek, and they look lovingly at each other. Then suddenly startle and look toward audience.

Mary Oh, Joseph

Joseph Oh, no, they found us.

Together The dog people.

Joseph OK, we are moving the camp. Do we move closer to the well, or farther away?

Mary Closer to the well. Let's go move the donkey's tether.

Joseph Yeah, he's probably eaten all the grass by now anyway.

Mary I think the donkey does like to travel. This way, he gets to eat
everybody's else's grass-all the grass between Nazareth and
Bethlehem.

They exit.

Scene Four
In the Stable

Mary's talk is punctuated throughout by labor pains She stands where she can lean forward, holding onto a piece of furniture or fixture of the stable or against the stable wall.

Mary It really is good you brought your tools, Joseph.

Joseph Yes *(pleased)*. And I thought it a generous offer.

Mary Me too. All our meals in return for the repairs you'll be making around the inn. That's good.

Joseph Yes, it makes things simple. And it's good for them too. There are bound to be more repairs than usual needed with so many people coming through for the census... *(musing)* there are a lot of people here.

Mary You know, I'm glad we're staying out here. I know the innkeeper felt sorry for us and was being charitable to let us stay in the stable, but, oh, really, I like it much better out here. Even with all the animals, it's quieter than in the inn. And it's more private ...And, oh, Joseph

...I think we'll need the privacy sooner than we may Have thought
...These pains are getting so intense...

Joseph Mary?

Mary I think they are finally the real thing. They are still far apart, but, they really hurt. I think it is time, Joseph.

Joseph *(Looks a little startled but quickly resumes a calm demeanor)* All right, Mary. I'll let the innkeeper's wife know. She said to let her know when the time came, and she'd see that we had hot water from the kitchen and that she'd help if we needed her. And there's a pile of clean hay over in the corner where I can make a bed for you. Just tell me when you're ready for it.

Mary Alright, Joseph. I'm not ready yet, but I'll tell you when
..... *(pause)*

Joseph...do you think the son of the Highest will mind being
Born here?

Joseph This isn't such a bad place; the animals are well cared for. There's plenty of clean straw. Clearly, they run a tight ship. I like the looks12

of the stable, dug into a hillside all the way to bedrock. And you know, Mary ...I suppose any place on earth might look shabby to the Son of the Highest. Besides, I expect that if he'd had a palace in mind, He would've picked someone besides us to be the parents.

Mary You're right. Perhaps that is my favorite part. He has indeed exalted the poor and lowly. He has come as a Savior to all the people ...rich and poor alike. Doesn't it make you feel so glad to know that our God cares for even the poor?

Joseph Yes it does. Very glad.

Mary And I'm glad I'm here. I may be a daughter of David, but I'm not used to palaces. Or even inns. I feel much more comfortable here.

Joseph Are you still glad you didn't stay home?

Mary Yes. Oh, yes. I'm so glad. I rather like being in Bethlehem where nobody knows us. No funny looks or whispers. Here we're just an honest husband and wife, ready to have a baby. And I'm so glad to be with you

Joseph I'm glad you want me; but wouldn't you rather have an experienced midwife? One would come in handy right about now.

Mary Well, remember, you know who the baby is And I know you'll take care of me, of us. You're always so level-headed, Joseph. Even before you were so heroic, marrying me-that was what swept my heart away-even before that, when I only knew you from a distance ...well, I was always glad they picked you for me. You seemed gentle and honest and so very dependable and level-headed. And Joseph ...I really need that now.

Joseph What's the matter?

Mary Well, I'm, I'm scared
..... Joseph.

Joseph Mary

Mary I know that it I think it will be alright in the end. People have been having babies since forever ...but...oh, Joseph ...this really hurts ...I'm afraid...

Joseph It's ok to be scared, but I also want you to know it's going to be OK.
The Lord is with you ...He won't let you down after all this.
Besides, I am here. I will be with you. I'm not going anywhere. We'll do
What we both know to do. God will take care of the rest.

Mary It won't be a very pretty sight.

Joseph I've seen plenty of blood before. Don't worry, Mary. I love you. And
I love this baby.

Mary Thank you, Joseph. (pain) You, know, Joseph I think the baby is
telling me it's going to be alright. I wonder if he's scared. It's
hard work for a baby too. Well, if he's telling me it will be
alright...And you are telling me too then it will Joseph
..... Joseph . It's getting worse. I
don't think I'll be talking much more ...You will pray, won't
you?

Joseph Yes. I already have been.

Mary I love you. (pain) I'm ready to go lie down now.

Joseph Come along. I'll help you.