

Luke 1:39-45 December 22 2018

My name is Mary but I also answer to Maria. I live in Nazareth. I am 14 years old. 14 is about the age when girls like me become betrothed. Being betrothed is being engaged and spoken for by a man. The man in my life is Joseph. He's much older than I am and may have been married before. I knew I had to keep myself pure for him. Other girls who did not keep themselves pure suffered the rebuke of their family and the townspeople. To be rebuked was akin to being dead and being dead would probably be easier.

One day a very strange moment happened to me. Suddenly in front of me was an angel bathed in bright light. I think this might have been the angel Gabriel. He spoke to me. "Good Morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty. Beautiful inside and out! God be with you." I was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured me "Mary you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus. He will be great, be called Son of the Highest. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. He will rule Jacob's house forever, no end, ever, to his kingdom." I protested to the angel "But how? I've never slept with a man." The angel answered me, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest hover over you; therefore, the child you will bring to birth will be called Holy, Son of God. And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is 6 months pregnant. Nothing, you see, is impossible with God."

I knew in my heart what I had to say. "Yes, I see it all now; I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say." And then the angel left.

It was very difficult for me to explain all of this to Joseph. How could I, who had kept herself pure, be pregnant with a child from God? I was scared and then not scared. I knew Joseph had a good and gentle heart. Maybe he intended to just quietly divorce me after the child was born. There isn't much future for a divorced woman with a child.

I needed to see my cousin Elizabeth so I didn't waste a minute. I traveled to a town in Judah in the hill country, straight to Zachariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard my greeting, the baby in her womb leaped. She was filled with the Holy Spirit and sang out exuberantly. Elizabeth said "You're so blessed amount women and the babe in you womb, also blessed! And why am I so blessed that the mother of my Lord visits me? The moment the sound of your greeting entered my ears, the babe in my womb skipped like a lamb for sheer joy. Blessed woman, who believed what God said, believed every word would come true!"

My answer to Elizabeth was "I'm bursting with God news; I'm dancing the song of my Savior God. God took one good look at me and look what happened-I'm the most fortunate woman on earth! What God has done for me will never be forgotten, the God whose very name is holy, set me apart from all other. His mercy flows in wave after wave on those who are in awe before him. He bared his arm and showed his strength, scattered the bluffing braggarts. He knocked tyrants off their high horses, pulled victims out of the mud. The starving poor sat down to a banquet; the callous rich are left out in the cold. He embraced his chosen child, Israel; he remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high. It's exactly what he promised beginning with Abraham and right up to now." I stayed with Elizabeth for 3 months and then came back to my own home.

When I got back home Joseph told me that Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral home town to be accounted for. So we are to travel from Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David he had to go there. We are packed and ready to go. My time for the birth is almost here. Walking is most difficult for me with the size that I now am. Joseph, kind gentle Joseph, has made arrangements for me to ride on a donkey. I only hope we can find a place to stay when we arrive and maybe find someone to help me with the birth. I'm not afraid as I know the Lord will be with me. Joseph will take care of me. Joseph told me that he had a dream that put all his fears of the child to rest. Joseph is calling me.....I have to go. AMEN

