

A Place Called Nazareth

Narrator 1: Nazareth was a small town.
It was just a village, west of the Sea of Galilee
It wasn't near anything important.
It wasn't close to anywhere in particular.

Narrator 2: Nazareth was a small town.
It was only a village. A village of small stone and brick houses.
Most of the people were farmers.
They grew wheat, olives, figs and grapes.
Others were craftsmen, carpenters, masons, or weavers.
They all led simple lives.
And they had just enough to get by.
They had just enough for their daily bread.

Narrator 1: Nazareth was a small town.
It was only a village
Far from trade routes or traffic.
Far from Roman governors and Jewish high priests.
Far from powerful people and big events.

Narrator 2: Nazareth was a small town.
It was only a village.
Where everyone knew everyone else.
And family values were strong.
And kids listened to their parents.
And people always did what they ought to do.

Narrator 1: Nazareth was a small town
It was only a village.
With ordinary people, living ordinary lives.
And then an angel named Gabriel came
And appeared to a young girl named Mary.

(Enter Mary down left side aisle to front of pulpit. Then enter Gabriel from center aisle.)

Gabriel: 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.'

Narrator 2: Mary, of course, was terrified by this divine visitor and his divine words.
She was thoroughly shaken.
Why was he there?
WHAT did he WANT?
Why was he talking to her of all people?

Gabriel: “Mary, don’t be afraid.
God is impressed with you.
And God has a special job for you.
Guess what? You will become pregnant by the Holy Spirit.
And you will give birth to a son.
And you will call his name Jesus.

(Mary looks terrified and skeptical.)

Gabriel: He will be great among the people.
He will be called ‘Son of the Most High.’
He will be more important than King David.
He will reign over Israel forever.

Mary: Wait.
How is this supposed to happen?
I’m not married.
I’ve never been with a man.

Gabriel: The Holy Spirit will come upon you, Mary.
God’s power will hover over you.
So your child will be called Holy.
He will be called Son of God.
Even your cousin Elizabeth, as old as she is, she is going to have a baby.
And no one thought she ever would.
Because, Mary, nothing is impossible with God.

Mary: Well. Here am I, the servant of the Lord.
Let it be with me just as you say.

(The angel departs. Mary departs.)

Narrator 1: This is the place called Nazareth.
It was just a small town, only a village.
And Mary was just an ordinary girl.
She was expecting to live an ordinary life.

Narrator 2: But according to God, she was more than ordinary.
She was extraordinary.
She was the one God chose to give birth to the Savior.
Whatever that meant.
Whatever it meant to carry the Christ within her.
Whatever it meant to bear God’s son into the world.
Whatever it meant to be the mother of this child.
That is what she would do.

Narrator 1: Mary could have said no to this extraordinary thing.
Because it would change her ordinary life.
It would shock her ordinary village.
It would scandalize her ordinary neighbors.
Mary could have said no to this extraordinary thing.

Narrator 2: But Mary said yes.
Without knowing what would happen.
Or How it would happen.
Or Why it would happen to her.
Mary said yes.

Narrator 1: Mary said yes when God showed up in her ordinary world.
She said yes to however God would work in her
And through her.
And with her.

Narrator 2: Mary said yes to bearing this child.
Yes to the extraordinary becoming part of the ordinary.
Yes to the sacred becoming part of the common.
Yes to heaven and earth meeting in her.
To the joy and the sorrow.
The hope and the despair.
The life and the death.
She said yes to bearing the Christ into the world
To the Word becoming flesh in her ordinary time and place.

HYMN Lo, How a Rose Ere Blooming

Narrator 1: Nazareth was a small town.
It was only a village
An ordinary place.
But God was about to do something extraordinary.
And not just with Mary.
See, God wasn't finished.
There was another ordinary person to that needed to play an extraordinary part.
Mary's future husband, Joseph.

Narrator 2: Without Joseph, our story is in trouble.
Mary is in trouble.
The world is in trouble;
Without the one who will take care of Mary as she takes care of this baby.

(Enter Joseph by left side aisle to front of pulpit.)

Joseph: I've heard the news about Mary.
I've heard Mary is going to have a baby.
And I know the baby isn't mine.

We were planning to be married soon.
We would have had a nice little ceremony.
The whole village would have been there.
There was going to be music and wine and food.
Oh, the food! The party would have gone on for days!
It would have been wonderful.

But now...now, Mary is pregnant.
And I don't care to know why or how.
I feel hurt and ashamed.
I thought I knew her.
I thought this would be a good marriage.
I thought she was a good girl, plain and simple.
But I was wrong.
And I guess there's nothing to do but call it off.
But I don't want Mary to be humiliated.
I don't want her or her baby to be hurt.
I don't want to accuse her in front of everyone and have her thrown out of town or
stoned to death.
I don't want that for her.
But I don't want whatever this is, either. I'll tell her tomorrow.

(Joseph goes to sleep in the chair by the choir)

(Enter Gabriel)

Gabriel: *(coming to stand by Joseph):*
'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid.
Take Mary as your wife.
Yes, she is pregnant, but the child she is bearing is God's child.
And this son will be your son too, because YOU—YOU, Joseph—are to
name him Jesus,
For he will save his people from their sins.'

(Joseph awakes looking determined; he and Gabriel depart)

Narrator 1: Joseph said yes.
He said yes to Mary.
He said yes to God and yes to a life he didn't plan on.
Yes to a life that would not be ordinary.
Yes to a life of caring for the Christ child.

And forever after in Nazareth, they would wonder about Joseph
They would wonder why he did such a thing.
They would wonder in this ordinary town why Joseph had such extraordinary
grace.

Narrator 2: They would wonder at the kind of love that Joseph had
The kind that gives up its own life for the life of another.
To protect
And safeguard
And save.

Narrator 1: They would wonder at the kind of love that Mary had
That gives up its own life for the life of another.
To bear
And labor to bring forth.
And nurture into adulthood.

Narrator 2: We all wonder at Mary and Joseph, two ordinary people
Who allowed God to do extraordinary things with them.
In the place called Nazareth.
Mary and Joseph say yes to God
So God can have a home with us.
So we can have a home with God.

Narrator 1: So that no one will be alone or afraid anymore.
So that we will know God is at work in the ordinary.

Narrator 2: God is in our common, everyday lives.
Inviting us to be part of a story that is extraordinary.
And that is the good news for all of us ordinary folks.

HYMN IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER