

“Joseph at the Stable”

by
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- What** This thoughtful skit reveals the intimacy Joseph may have had with God as he talks to God about the difficult questions and emotions he felt along the way. But once Jesus was born, Joseph understood that it really was God's plan, and finds himself without words to express his gratitude for being chosen.
- Themes: Advent, Christmas, Birth of Christ, Hope, Nativity, Joseph, Manger, Trusting God, Worry, Faith, Fear, Doubt, Intimacy with God
- Who** 1 male, 30-50
- When** The first Christmas. In the middle of the night or very early morning, after Jesus is born.
- Costumes and Props** If presenting true to biblical period, a simple tunic with an outer garment, sandals and a blanket to keep warm. This can also be presented if it were a more modern-day Joseph, in which case he would wear a typical construction worker's garb: jeans, work boots, flannel or sweater, vest or coat, stocking cap.
- Why** Luke 1:26-35, Matthew 1:18-23, Hebrews 1:1-2, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:2, 6-7, Isaiah 40:1-2, Micah 5:2-3, John 1:1-4, 14, John 20:31
- How** This piece focuses on the intimacy Joseph may have had with God. It should be delivered honestly and thoughtfully and should not be rushed. You get the feeling that Joseph has just been through a whirlwind journey and is just now able to gather his thoughts and be quiet before the Lord. The challenge for the actor is to internalize the thoughts of Joseph as if they were his own and allow the gratitude and the weight of what he is experiencing to wash over him in the end.
- Time** Approximately 4-6 minutes

Lights up on an empty stable scene. The stage is bare, except for an empty manger in the middle of the stage. The scene is quiet, serene. It's almost as if you can hear the air blow through the gaps in the boards of the stable. Joseph enters by himself. He is quiet and thoughtful. He looks back over his shoulder one last time, then looks at the empty manger before beginning to speak.

Joseph: *(looks up)* You had me going, you know? Yes, I know you know. *(shakes head)* All this. I still can't— This whole year has been the wildest, most chaotic time of my life! To begin with? When your betrothed comes to you and tells you she's been impregnated by the Holy Spirit?! What was I to feel? How was I to react?! Should I turn my back to her and allow her judgment to be played out to the letter of the law? Could I bear to see her hurt like that, or worse? On the other hand, her story was just so... I mean how could I...

You sometimes don't make it easy, you know?

I was thinking maybe I should just quietly annul the marriage. Just...make it go away. But then...I couldn't get past the fact that, deep down, I felt like I really *knew* Mary, knew her heart, who she *was*. And when you *know* someone...*love* someone...sometimes you just have to choose to trust them, don't you? And then, of course, you chose to come to *me*, *just* like you did her. And that was...wow...first off, you really know how to make an entrance! But that was a nice confirmation of what I was hoping in my heart was the right path. Thank you for that, by the way. Not for scaring the life out of me, of course. But for choosing to come to me. That meant a lot.

So, I leapt. I chose to trust, even though I didn't understand, and I married her quickly and quietly. And then, a few months later, we have the census. Something about this seemed dangerous to me. And I was afraid to tell Mary the truth about how I felt, because I didn't want to worry her. But what sort of story could I spin to my new bride, who was nine months pregnant, to convince her to go on a hundred-mile journey where the only transportation was a donkey? "Hey, my love...let's go horseback riding!" *(shakes head, laughing to himself)* No...no, I told her the truth. And she took it better than I. I think her faith is a lot stronger than mine.

It wasn't the weather, or the terrain, or Mary's condition that pushed me over the edge. Even when we got here, middle of the night, nothing or no one to take us in or give us shelter, once again, I *chose* to believe...in spite of my doubts and fears. Because just like with Mary, I felt like...I *feel like*...I know you, know your love, who you are. And, when you know someone, *love* someone, well...you know...

No, it was about midway through the labor that I finally couldn't take any more. Mary...my Mary...she was in so much *agony*. She cried *so* loud...for *so long*...and she had that look in her eyes, like a wild animal fighting to stay alive. All I could do was sit there like an idiot, hold her hand in mine as she squeezed all the blood out of it, press my forehead against hers, and shut my eyes while inside my head I was screaming out at you "*You did this... You made this happen!!* You brought this scandal in our lives, put this wife and child in my care, brought us out here in the middle of nowhere and then left us *alone*...and now I'm going to lose them both!! *PLEASE, GOD, YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING!!!*"

That's when I heard that cry. I never knew the cry of a baby could be so...*hopeful*. And, just like that...I knew... Yes. *You did this*. You made this happen. And this *thing you did*...this is something you have been planning a long, *long* time...isn't it? All those stories written in your word, all those prophecies my father and my grandfather and their fathers and grandfathers whispered around campfires, all those things you have been promising for *hundreds* of years...it's all come true.

Takes in a deep breath as he looks around, taking in the scene.

And now there are people who have just...*shown up*...from all over! And they have walked in to this dirty, drafty, donkey-sweat and sheep-dung infused stable like they've been searching for him their whole lives. And now I know that I have been too.

His smile brightening, almost boyish.

I thought about what I would say to you should you have chosen to appear to me again tonight, like you did before. You don't have to. But I've thought about it. I've thought about the fact that, just like with my ancestors, you have chosen to fulfill your promises in just the right time, in just your way, just when your people are at the brink of losing hope. And, in the midst of the most important event in history...probably the most important event that ever will be, you have chosen me, just a dumb carpenter, to be your servant, to care for my wife, and for our son... *Your son*.

Opens mouth and shakes head, like he can't find the words.

I don't have the words in response to all of this...thank you...thank you...

Lights fade.