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**“You Ever Met a Man Like Joseph?”**

by  
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<b>What</b>	Joseph’s next-door neighbor, Elias, talks about Joseph’s character and the dilemma Joseph faced when he learned that Mary is pregnant. Themes: Advent, Christmas, Redemption, Grace, Monologue
<b>Who</b>	Elias- older male
<b>When</b>	Prior to Jesus’ birth in a simple Nazareth neighborhood
<b>Costumes and Props</b>	Simple calf-length work tunic tied with rope at waist Sturdy handmade wooden cane
<b>Why</b>	Matthew 1:18-24; Luke 1: 26-56; Isaiah 35:1-3
<b>How</b>	Project the respect and concern Elias feels for Joseph. Elias is an older man with a working-man’s vocabulary. Develop gestures to help the audience stay on track with who is speaking when Elias quotes Joseph.
<b>Time</b>	Approximately 8-9 minutes

*Elias hobbles onto stage with handmade wooden cane.*

**Elias:** You ever met a man like Joseph? He's my neighbor, you know, and he's a real good one. *(smiles and nods head)*

Fixed my gate over there without ever sayin' a word about it. *(picks up cane and shows it to audience)* Made me this cane for my bum leg, too.

But I was real worried about Joseph last week. Something was botherin' him bad. *(shakes head with concern)* I could see it in his eyes. And in the droop of his shoulders. He'd lost his spirit and his gusto.

And that's a big change since he first told me he was marryin' Mary.

I don't know his Mary very well. But I remember how excited Joseph was when he first met her: "She's so beautiful...inside and out! She has a sweet smile and a wonderful, warm heart...for people and for Yahweh."

Joseph talked about Mary a lot. Why, I couldn't shut him up! And that was pretty amazin' because Joseph's not much of a talker. Made me feel young again, it did! *(chuckles)*

Then, not long after that, Mary took off. Went to the hill country somewhere near Jerusalem to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Somethin' about Elizabeth havin' a baby even though she was way too old. *(raises eyebrows and shrugs as if perplexed)*

Joseph was concerned because it was a long trip, but Mary said Yahweh wanted her to go. Now how could a man argue with that? *(shrugs and gestures with surprise)*

Soon as Mary left, Joseph got busy preparin' their bridal chamber. And makin' a fancy chest for her. I could always tell when he was workin' on that chest 'cause he whistled. I liked to go over to watch him fit the pieces together. And to watch him carve and polish a dozen olive wood roses for decoratin' the corners. It almost brought tears to my eyes to see him runnin' his work-worn hands over those roses.

I made up my mind I'd find some excuse to be there when Joseph gave the chest to Mary.

But that never happened.

Truth is, Mary came back to Nazareth before Joseph finished the chest. And Joseph was so eager to see her that he ran right over to her house.

I kept my ears cocked to hear him sing happy love songs when he come back.

*(shakes head sadly)* Instead, he shuffled up the path between our houses, head down and hurt hangin' out all over. It didn't take no special skill to see somethin' was wrong...real wrong.

I didn't know what to do, but it was clear he needed a friend. So I called out, "Hey, Joseph, what's goin' on?"

"Don't...really...know," he said, voice dull and dead.

"Mary?" I asked hesitantly.

He nodded right slow.

"She don't wanna be married to you?" I asked.

"No. She still wants to be my wife," he said, gloom shadowin' every word.

"Then, what's the problem?"

"I don't want to talk about it," Joseph said, pushin' open the door to his house.

"Hey," I said, surprisin' myself. "Won't do you no good broodin' over this by yourself. So how 'bout you tell me what's goin' on."

Joseph shook his head and walked into his house.

Now I ain't usu'lly so bold, but I hoisted myself over the threshold with my cane and said, "Look, you need a friend tonight, so I'm gonna be your friend even if you don't want me to."

Then I put my old, bony hand 'neath his chin and lifted his head so we was lookin' eye to eye.

He started weepin' like as if he couldn't go on livin'.

Well now, I really didn't know what to do, so I just let him cry.

After a long time, his cries turned to sobs and he muttered, "Ma--ry's going to have a baby."

"Oh," I murmured. "And you're not the father?"

Joseph nodded in misery.

"But I thought your Mary was a trust-worthy, God-fearin' woman..."

"So did I," he said and started weepin' again.

Then, almost as if he'd run out of tears, he sat up and looked me straight in the eyes and said, "I still do."

"But a woman can't get pregnant by herself," I said slowly.

"I know," he said.

"You paid the bride price. She's s'posed to be faithful to you," I reminded him.

"Yes..." he said, startin' to weep again.

"You got every right to be angry," I told him. "Adult'ry is wrong."

"Yes, I know."

"You're a good man, Joseph. A good, decent, honest, upright man who's respected in the community." (*grimaces and throws up his hands in bewilderment*) "This'll tarnish your reputation."

Joseph started sobbing so hard his whole body shook. Then he took a deep breath and said, "But I can't bear to have Mary disgraced publicly...or...stoned."

"Oh," I said. "So you're worried about Mary?"

Joseph nodded miserably.

"You care more about Mary than you do yourself?" I asked. "So, what're you gonna do?"

"I don't know," he said. "I guess I'll divorce her privately, and hope she'll be able to go on with life."

He shook his head in misery, then gave me a heart-broken hug. "Elias, you'll keep this quiet, won't you?"

I nodded. For the first time that evening, I heard a hint of the Joseph I knew so well seepin' back into this more-than-decent man.

Joseph thanked me for comin' and ushered me to the door sayin', "Elias, it's past your bedtime. You go on home and go to bed. It's safe to leave me alone now."

And that would have been the end of the story because I can keep a secret, you know. But the next mornin', Joseph came knockin' on my door long before anyone should've.

"Elias! Wake up! I've got to tell you what happened last night!"

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"Last night? It's still last night so far as I can see," I grumbled, stumblin' to the door.

By then, Joseph was pushin' through the door. And I was rubbin' my eyes and stretchin' my brain tryin' to figure out what could've changed this man so much so fast.

"Elias! An angel visited me!"

"An angel?" I muttered.

I shook my head. Joseph had always been a practical, get-it-done, no-nonsense sort of neighbor. And now he was seein' angels?

"Oh Elias! It was sort of like a dream. But it was...it was so real. One minute I was asleep and the next, an angel was telling me..."

"Whoa! Whoa! Slow down, Joseph," I said. "Did you say an angel talked right straight to you?"

"Yes, Elias, that's exactly what I'm saying! An angel told me Mary's baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit and should just bring her home as my wife.

"Conceived by the Holy Spirit? What does that mean?" I muttered, just startin' to wake up.

"That He's God's Son, and we're to name Him Jesus because He'll save us from our sins."

"Ah, does that mean he's the promised Messiah Isaiah wrote about? The One Isaiah said would set us free?"

"That very One," Joseph said, his smile broader than I'd ever seen it. Then he held up one of the roses he'd so lovingly made. "It's time for the desert to blossom like a rose..."

So I ask you: You ever met a man like Joseph? *(shakes head in wonder)*

And, more important, you ever met a God like Joseph's?

Might just be worth your time to do that, you know! *(raps cane on floor for emphasis)*

'Cause you never know what He might be up to."

*Raises cane to point up to God. Then hobbles offstage joyously.*