




THE TWELVE VOICES OF



CHRISTMAS

— WOODROW KROLL —

The Twelve Voices of Christmas
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MARY

VOICE OF WONDER

LUKE 1:26-38

No other person was more astonished at the events in her life than was Mary. As the Christmas story unfolded, she was struck with awe. She wondered at the message of the angel, at the words of Elizabeth, at the experience of Zachariah. She wondered at the birth of her baby and the homage paid to Him. But most of all she wondered at the graciousness of God in choosing her to give birth to the Savior of the world.

I was going about my daily routing at my home in Nazareth when I heard a knock at my door. My parents were not home, and I was apprehensive when I saw a stranger standing there. He didn't look familiar at all. Somehow he didn't even look human.

"May I help you, sir?" I asked.

After the customary greeting, he blessed me saying, "You are a highly favored person. The Lord is with you."

What a strange greeting! I didn't know what it meant. I was nobody special. My family was not special; we were poor, ordinary people. We lived in Nazareth, not Jerusalem. Everyone from Nazareth was considered to be less than middle class. How could I be a highly favored one? I was bewildered and even upset.

"Do not be afraid, Mary," he said, "for you have found favor with God." It was then that I realized he was no ordinary man. He must be a messenger from God, although I could hardly comprehend it. Later I learned that he was Gabriel, an angel sent from the throne room of God.

Then he told me how God would favor me. I would conceive and bear a Son. *That*

isn't possible, I thought. *I can't have a baby. I'm a virgin. How can that be?*

The messenger continued, "You will name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the highest. God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end."

I asked the angel, "How can this possibly be, since I'm a virgin?" It wasn't that I didn't believe it. I believed everything he had told me, no matter how incomprehensible. I just didn't understand it. How could such a wonderful thing take place?

Then Gabriel explained how all this would happen. He said the Holy Spirit would come over me in such a way that the power of God would enclose me; and in the shadow of His overarching Shekinah glory, I would become pregnant. My holy child would not be the offspring of Joseph. He would be the Son of God!

The birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah in their old age was miraculous. But the birth of my baby would be even more miraculous; it would be unique. He would be born to me, a virgin, conceived without

the benefit of a father. He would be human and divine. He would be the Son of God and the Son of a humble Nazarene girl.

Then the messenger said, “Nothing will be impossible with God.” I believed him.

I knew becoming pregnant before I was married would endanger my relationship with Joseph and put my reputation at stake. But I was willing to face the shame and reproach, for I knew that God’s supernatural hand was at work within me. Humbly I gave my assent. I said, “God, whatever you want, I want.”

Everything Gabriel announced to me came true. I eventually did marry Joseph, although our marriage was not consummated until after Jesus was born.

When the time for delivery was approaching, Joseph had a difficult decision to make. A census was to be taken, and each man had to go to the city of his ancestors to enroll his household. For Joseph, that was Bethlehem, the City of David. Should he leave me at home in Nazareth? I might be treated rudely, for everyone knew I was pregnant before my marriage. Should he take me along? It would be a difficult tip for a pregnant woman, involving days of grueling travel. But I longed to see Bethlehem again, so Joseph decided to take me with him.

During that exhausting trip, I had time to ponder many things, including the words of Micha, which one of the rabbis had told us about. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, he had said. So even though this census was ordered by a ruler who wanted to add to his own glory, he

was unknowingly making it possible for Micha’s prophecy to be fulfilled.

We arrived in Bethlehem late one afternoon. The town was swarming with people there for the enrollment. I was very tired, but there was no place to stay – the inns were full. People saw me and then quickly looked away. My situation was obvious, but no one cared to give up his bed for me. I did not tell Joseph, but I was feeling an occasional light pain. The labor was beginning. At last Joseph returned with the news that he had found a place to stay. It was only a stable, but it would be warm and away from the eyes and ears of curious people.

I gave birth to Jesus during the night. We wrapped Him in what we had – long strips of cloth – and laid Him in a manger. There wasn’t much light, only a small oil lamp. But I could see the features of His tiny face, and I cried. Everything came back to me – the words of the angel, the inspired words of Elizabeth, the message of the angel to Zachariah. I thought of dear Joseph and his firm faith in what the angel had told him. I remembered his tender care for me throughout my pregnancy. And I looked at that baby in wonder.

Later that night, while I was cuddling Jesus in my arms, some shepherds appeared. They wanted to see the baby. They, too, had been visited by an angel – in fact, a whole host of angels. That is how they had heard that Jesus had been born. When they left the stable that night, they were glorifying God and praising Him for all they had seen and heard, determined to tell everyone their story.

But I remained silent as I thought about all that had happened.

Looking back now, I still don't understand everything. I've often thought of Eve, in the Garden of Eden. By her, sin and death were brought into the world. But by the birth of my Son, life and immortality were made possible.

I thank Jehovah for allowing me to be one of the twelve voices of Christmas. But more importantly, I thank Him for His graciousness in choosing me to be the one through whom His Son came into the world.