



The Birth



I want to take you on a journey today...a journey of a young woman who has a promise before her, but is walking a hard road...

■ by Erin Davis, MSW, LCSW

Imagine yourself now, walking on the dirt roads of Bethlehem. You are nine months pregnant, tired, poor, and clinging with all your life to a promise. You have been walking all day. You are cold, dirty, and miles from home; from all things familiar. You are in a strange town looking for shelter. You are knocking, knocking, and knocking...no one answers. Those that do turn you away sharply...no warmth in their eyes. They look right through you...you are just another insignificant body that they have no room for. The tension in the still night is unnerving.

You are reminded of Gabriel...you are hanging on his every word because the life is draining from you as you keep walking. Your body aching as you slowly creep on...feeling alone, rejected.

Your mind is grappling...searching for his exact words. "He told me I was highly favored. He told me not to be afraid...that my child will be great, the Son of the Most High...his kingdom will never end! The most important promise right now though, the one that you almost forgot with all the anticipation of this coming King, was that He, the Lord, is with you." These are the simple words that resonate in the deep places...the ones that keep you from throwing your hands up. You feel your breath even out, your muscles relax. The tightness in your chest loosens up. He told you that no word of God's would ever fail. You feel something strengthen within you...almost like a new sense of adrenaline to finish the final steps of a race.

And then you feel it...a strange pain riddling through your body...concentrated in your abdomen. You know...it has begun. A crazy, almost wild excitement overtakes you...you can't tell if it's joy, exhaustion or terror. You have no place to stay...where will you give birth to this King, your son, your most treasured promise?

You scream out to Joseph...he looks at you and just knows. He can sense the desperation in your voice. He scrambles ahead for a few minutes and comes back with news that he has found a place. It's meager and dark and cold, but he can make a fire and gather some straw...and you would be together. You just can't wait to be off of your feet, so you agree...holding on to him tightly...gritting your teeth between contractions. This promise feels so heavy, so hard. You don't know if you have what it takes...if you can really do it. The words come again "He is with me." You drink them in and they give you the nourishment you need to keep putting one foot in front of the other.

You finally arrive to your destination. Joseph wasn't lying, this is pretty bleak...this stable...a place only animals would sleep, but your weariness melts at the sight of a soft place to lay your head...somewhere to rest, but also to war with the fire raging in your insides. Something within you tells you that this battle has just begun.

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The pain feels like it is going on forever. Suddenly, you feel so far away from home...far away from the generations of women who know how to do this...who could help you through this. Joseph looks calm on the outside, but you can see it in his eyes and his posture—he is terrified...not knowing how to soothe you...direct you. God where are you?? I need you!!

This time your spirit hears it: I am with you...ok, He is with me. I'm not alone. You take this promise and cloak yourself with it. What feels like hours later, just when you think that you can't take it any longer, you feel a strange and sudden urge to push. You grab Joseph by the arm and shake him awake. He's completely disoriented...straw in his hair...you don't care...it's time! All you want is to meet this child, your baby, the one given unto you, but not really yours.

You push, once, twice, thrice, and on the 8th push...He emerges. Joseph catches him...the atmosphere around you changes...sweet relief...but also something more...something so eerily peaceful. ..like a cool breeze after a hot day of work. It wraps around you and cradles you as you look upon your son...God's son. Your heart is filled with joy...an unspeakable joy that you can't put into words. You grab Him and pull him close to your heart...your skin touching...your heart beating as it never has before.

When you finally tear your eyes away from him for a second, you look again at your surroundings. This is hardly accommodations for a King, but a God who could pick you, a humble, poor, servant...He must have known. Maybe this kingdom will look different... a king born in a stable...a Son of the Most High birthed among the animals. Something about the thought of this crazy paradox makes you feel free...more connected and yet more free.

You wrap him in some cloth that you find and put him in a manger. You can't stop looking at him...He is so incredibly beautiful, you can't put your finger on why, because there are no especially appealing features. You know in your spirit that the promise is here...He is the promise that will not fail.

Later there were shepherds and angels...gifts of plenty...but what you remember most is that this life came from you...a life that would be called the son of the Most High. These are the treasures that you pondered in your heart. ■



Erin Davis is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and sees clients in our River Forest, IL location.

This reflection is based on the following Bible passages: **Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-19**



An invitation to reflect...

This reflection came about from a desire to understand the humanity of the stories in the Bible. Often, I would read scripture looking for a promise of certainty to stand on, instead of as an invitation to reflect. When I see the humanity of the experiences of Mary, Joseph, or even of Jesus, the words take on new life and meaning. I begin to explore, question and discover more in myself and my experience with God. When I read these with clients, I use them as tools of exploration...to notice what God is eliciting in them. What do they feel in their bodies, or what word or phrase jumped out at them? ~ Erin Davis MSW LCSW

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