

Elizabeth & Zechariah (2)

Ryan: Mary took the advice of Joseph's mum and headed off to Elizabeth and Zechariah's house where she was given a warm welcome. So, to follow this story, that's where we need to go next. Much has happened since we last saw Elizabeth and Zechariah, but we'll let them tell us in their own words. Over to you, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth: Well, you should have heard the noise the day our baby, John, was born. Of course, he was crying like new-born babies do the first time they exercise their lungs. But then there was the noise of all our friends and neighbours celebrating as well. That was a great day! The curse had been lifted off us at last, and God had blessed us with a child. Of course, I was exhausted, but also very happy that the baby was born alive and well. Zechariah, still unable to speak, was dancing around the house and courtyard showing the baby off to everyone. He had to wait another eight days before getting his voice back. It was at the naming ceremony, when they asked Zechariah what the baby's name should be. He wrote on his writing tablet...

Zechariah: His name is John.

Elizabeth: That's right. His name is John. That's what you wrote. The people didn't believe me when I told them. But Zechariah confirmed it, and then...

Zechariah: I got my voice back!

Elizabeth: He did...so we celebrated that as well. Another great day!

My cousin Mary was with us. Her father brought her here a few months before the birth. She was carrying her own child. At first it wasn't too obvious that she was pregnant, and the people in our community were very welcoming to her. But then someone guessed her condition and people began talking. They wanted to know where her husband was, and why she was staying with us? Zechariah and I talked with Mary about what we should say. Because of our own experience with an angel, we believed Mary's claim, that she too had been visited by an angel who told her the baby was from God. But unlike us, with Mary not married, this put her in a very difficult situation.

Zechariah: Tell them about the time John moved inside you.

Elizabeth: Oh, yes. This was before John was born...obviously. I was talking to Mary one day. She was going through a really hard time. She hadn't heard any news from Nazareth for a while, and this was when our neighbours had started talking and asking questions about her. On top of that, she wasn't sleeping much, and she was being sick a lot. All this left her feeling very tired and depressed. She was telling me that she felt God had abandoned her in this terrible situation. It was a very emotional conversation, and we were both crying. Then John moved inside of me. It almost felt like, and this may sound silly, but it almost felt as if he was trying to reach out towards Mary, with his hand, to comfort her. I said this to Mary and we both laughed. It was a very strange and yet wonderful moment. Two babies promised by God. Cousins. Destined to do great things in this world, yet at that moment in time, totally vulnerable. In a tiny way, John reaching out his little hand like that, gave some comfort to both of us.

Anyway, after that, Zechariah got angry about the gossip going round and decided to take matters into his own hands. As the village priest, he called all the elders of the synagogue together. Then, with lots of scribbling on his writing tablet he told those elders to leave Mary alone...and they did! I was so proud of him for doing that. It had the effect of changing the atmosphere in our village. People stopped talking ABOUT Mary and started talking TO her instead.

Mary was with me when John was born. Poor girl...seeing me going through childbirth, knowing it would soon be happening to her.

Zechariah: But then Joseph came.

Elizabeth: Yes dear, Joseph came. Just after John was born. If he had been feeling angry with Mary, there was no obvious sign of it when he turned up. He seemed very kind and considerate towards her. They went off for a walk and a long conversation on their own. We don't know what was said, obviously, but when they returned, the two of them were happy and reconciled to each other. It was a lovely thing to see.

Zechariah: Yes.

Elizabeth: So, the next day Mary went back to Nazareth with Joseph. It was wonderful having her stay with us. Getting to know her better. We became great friends. She is such a lovely girl. We were sad to see her go, weren't we dear?

Zechariah: Yes.

Elizabeth: We do hope that she and Joseph will be able to make a good life together, for them and for the baby.