

The Word



'What are you thinking about?'

'What am I not thinking about!' Mary's sense of humour had not been dulled by the night's events. Hers was true humour of being able to see life as it is, and have real dreams. 'I am so glad for this quiet at last. Now there's time to think.' She spoke wearily and Joseph wished he had not disturbed her.

To say it had been a busy night was the understatement of eternity. Within hours of the child's birth they had been invaded by shepherds. Men of the earth who would help a ewe give birth, yet hold a baby with fearful unease now shouting, now whispering, now cooing, now open-mouthed in silent incredulity, then all talking at once about angels and God's glory, about peace on earth, about the Christ, the Saviour, the kingdom of God; about the manger cot and the baby clothes; and heavenly messages come true. The shepherd's story was no surprise for this couple, but gratifying all the same. They had soon learned to live in the presence of mystery; with thoughts few others could share.

'There's so much to think about,' Joseph spoke more to himself than Mary. 'So many words. I can't rest for them tumbling over in my mind. I wonder, Mary, if they'll ever sort themselves out in my mind. And it's not just tonight. Everything you've said. All that Elizabeth told you. I feel that if I could get all the words in order I would understand God's ways.'

Mary moved the covers across the manger. She looked again at her son. Joseph was wound up now. Unusual for him, he wanted to talk; to fill the silence. 'Of course, we'll call him Jesus.'

Mary's smile was gratifying. It assured him again that she knew how costly it had been for him to be obedient to God's orders. 'Jesus,' she repeated slowly, thoughtfully, listening to the sound.

'I suppose when he grows up, he'll be a teacher...'

'I think a carpenter, first,' Mary quietly interrupted him.

'Maybe, but when he's a teacher, there'll be more words.'

'Yes,' Mary agreed. 'But they'll all be summed up in one word.'

Joseph looked puzzled. Mary was thinking too deeply for him again.

'We've said it,' she replied. 'One word. One name. Jesus !'

The tiredness slipped from her like a wrap from her shoulders. She understood and wanted to share it with Joseph. She tried to explain.

'Words are curious things. We say them and we can't take them back. We speak them and other people hear them in a different way or give them different meanings. You have to see words in action before they are really meaningful. Like love. The word can mean so many different feelings. But when someone loves you and shows it by their actions, you know the words. It's like that with God,' she went on. 'You can't really describe him in words, but when you know him and feel him the words don't matter. He IS the word - God !'

'I think I understand,' said Joseph hesitantly. 'But then.....I'm not sure.'

'I believe,' said Mary that our Jesus will tell people all about God's love and truth, his mercy and his justice. But he won't just tell them, he'll show them. He is God's Son remember. He'll be the word !

The name, Jesus, Saviour, will say it all.'

At that moment the baby stirred and gave a cry. Mary lifted him from the manger, still carefully wrapped in his birth clothes and gave him to Joseph.

'He is Jesus,' she said softly. Then, with a passionate longing in her voice.

'Joseph, it will be as simple as that. People will receive him, as you have done, and believe in him, and then all the words will come together in Jesus, God's Word ... in a man!