

God's Timing

Written by Joanna Richards ©

First Performed December 2017 at Elk Lake Baptist Church, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Director Notes: This play is based on scripture and shares the birth of Jesus through the eyes of Joseph, re-telling the story to his son Jesus as a bedtime story.

Read through the script and assign parts based on the capability of the kids to memorize lines and portray the character effectively. The age recommendations are suggestions; a strong young actor can take on a part for an older child. Actions and lighting are indicated in brackets and italics.

Actors:

Joseph: Role for a 12 to 14 year old, or adult

Jesus: Role for an 7 to 9 year old

Zachariah: Role for a 10 to 14 year old

Angel Gabriel: Role for a 10 to 14 year old

Young Mary: Role for an 8 to 14 year old

Elizabeth: Role for a 10 to 16 year old

Children that interact with Zachariah and Elizabeth: This section is broken down into 5 parts to be assigned to children as they have capacity for the lines. You could have a *larger* group with each person having *less* lines, or a *smaller* group with each person having *more* lines.

Shepherds: This section is broken down into 5 parts, and can be the same children from the scene with Elizabeth and Zachariah, or new children.

Sheep: Small children can be part of the shepherd scene as sheep (which is super cute!).

Choir: The angels can be a live human choir or simply playing music with the image of angels projected on a screen. Both are effective.

Total Actors Required: Minimum 11

Set-up and Instructions:

The **stage** is split into two parts, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the stage is a bedroom scene where **lights** go up and down as indicated in the script. $\frac{2}{3}$ of the stage is where the action happens and lights go up and down as the action plays out.

The **backdrop** can be very simple (e.g., black curtain) or set up to look like ancient times.

Costumes really help the kids get into character and help the audience to suspend their disbelief.

Scene 1:

(Scene opens with a father putting son to bed.)

Joseph: *(finishing a bedtime story)*...and the two goats found their way back to the barn just in time for the end of the harvest. The End.

Jesus: Dad, can I have one more story?

Joseph: That was one more story.

Jesus: Please?

Joseph: It's late son.

Jesus: Please? Tell me about when I was born. I love that one.

Joseph: *(Sighs.)* Ok, but this is the last, last story. *Joseph gets comfortable.* The strange occurrences didn't start with us. They started with your Aunt Liz and your Uncle Zach. They were wonderful people. Good hearted. Generous. Honourable. But they didn't have any kids, and they wanted kids. Uncle Zach was a priest as you know, and he had special duties to perform before God in the temple.

(Lights come up on the other half of the stage and dim on Joseph and Jesus; Zachariah comes on stage and does the actions of the narration).

He was working his typical shift, and it came his turn to enter the sanctuary of God to burn incense. And this was a big deal for Uncle Zach because this opportunity only comes once in a lifetime for a priest. So he was already feeling excited and a bit nervous. Just as he was finishing his job, an angel of God appeared just to the right of the altar of incense, paralyzing Uncle Zach with fear.

(Angel enters)

Angel: Don't fear, Zachariah. Your prayer has been heard. Elizabeth, your wife, will bear you a son. You are to name him John. You're going to leap like a gazelle for joy, and not only you—many will delight in his birth. He'll achieve great stature with God.

He'll drink neither wine nor beer. He'll be filled with the Holy Spirit from the moment he leaves his mother's womb. He will turn many sons and daughters of Israel back to their God. He will herald God's arrival in the style and strength of Elijah, soften the hearts of parents to children, and kindle devout understanding among hardened skeptics—he'll get the people ready for God.

Zachariah: Do you expect me to believe this? I'm an old man and my wife is an old woman.

Angel: I am Gabriel, I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent especially to speak with you and bring you this glad news. But because you won't believe me, you'll be unable to say a word until the day of your son's birth. Every word I've spoken to you will come true on time—*God's* time.

Joseph: So when Uncle Zach came back out of the sanctuary, it had been a long time, and everyone was waiting around, (*crowd gathers*) wondering why he was taking so long. When he did come out, and couldn't speak, they knew he had seen a vision. He continued speechless and had to use sign language with the people.

Zachariah: (*gestures to try to explain what happened.*)

Child 1: You saw a large bird.

Child 2: You have someone beside you that is holding a baby.

Child 4: Your eyes are very large.

Child 5: Your lips are chapped and the person beside you with a baby has you surprised.

Zachariah: *hangs his head in frustration.*

Child 3: My lips are chapped too.

Child 5: Here, have some olive oil balm.

(They all exit - lights on the action side of the stage go down and go up on Joseph and Jesus)

Scene 2:

Joseph: When the course of his priestly assignment was completed, he went back home. It wasn't long before Aunt Liz conceived. She was so happy, she didn't tell a soul and she closed herself away for 5 months just enjoying being pregnant. That's when your mom met the angel Uncle Zach had spoken to.

(Lights dim on Joseph and Jesus and come up on the other side of the stage - younger Mary enters and sits with some mending)

Joseph: She was living in Nazareth when we were engaged, but she was still living with grandma and grandpa.

(Gabriel enters)

Angel: Good morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty, Beautiful inside and out! God be with you.

(Mary recoils, looking terrified)

Angel: Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus.

He will be great,
be called 'Son of the Highest.'
The Lord God will give him
the throne of his father David;
He will rule Jacob's house forever—
no end, ever, to his kingdom."

Mary: But how? I am not yet married.

Angel: The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
the power of the Highest hover over you;
Therefore, the child you bring to birth
will be called Holy, Son of God.

And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months pregnant! Nothing, you see, is impossible with God.

Mary: Yes, I see it all now: I'm the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you say.

(Gabriel leaves, lights fade on Mary and come up on Joseph and Jesus.)

Joseph: At the same time, an angel appeared to me in a dream, telling me that I was to take your mom as my wife because the baby in her was from the Holy Spirit, that she would give birth to a son, and I was to give him the name Jesus, because he would save his people from their sins.

Jesus: What was Gabriel like?

Joseph: Your mom says he was fierce and beautiful. Do you know the feeling you get when a storm is coming on the sea? That's how he made her feel. So much beauty and so much power, it's overwhelming.

Jesus: I'd like to meet him.

Joseph: You may yet, Jesus. You may yet. So your mom went straight to see Aunt Liz, and when she arrived, the baby in her belly, that's your cousin John, leaped!

(Lights come up as Mary calls from offstage, Elizabeth is on stage and jumps as her baby moves. Lights dim on Joseph and Jesus.)

Mary: Elizabeth! Elizabeth! It's Mary. Why didn't you tell me??

Elizabeth: You're so blessed among women, and the babe in your womb, also blessed!
And why am I so blessed that the mother of my Lord visits me?
The moment the sound of your greeting entered my ears,
The babe in my womb skipped like a lamb for sheer joy.
Blessed woman, who believed what God said, believed every word would come true!

Which is more that I can say for my husband!

Mary: I'm bursting with this news;

My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name.
His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in
their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up
the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his
descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.

Elizabeth: God is speaking Mary. The time of waiting is ending.

Mary: We are blessed.

(The women embrace and laugh as the lights fade. Lights come back up on Joseph and Jesus.)

Scene 3:

Joseph: Your mom stayed there with Aunt Liz for the first few months of being pregnant with you, then came back and lived with me. Your aunt had your cousin John just before she left, and that's when Uncle Zach was able to speak again. *(Zach and Liz enter with baby and crowd)* They had taken your cousin to be circumcised and named on the 8th day, but the family wouldn't believe Aunt Liz that he was supposed to be called John,

Child 5: He shall be called Zacheriah.

Child 1: Named after his father.

Child 2: That is our custom.

Liz: No! He is to be called John.

Child 3: Woman, that makes no logical sense.

Child 4: There is no one among your relatives who has that name.

Liz: Don't "woman" me. Zach agrees. Don't you honey?

Zach: Nods vigorously.

Child 3: We can't just go changing convention and proper process because the husband can't speak.

Child 4: If we don't follow the patterns of the patriarchs, we will lose our identity as a people.

Child 3: If we lose our identity as a people, we become nothing.

Child 5: Empty.

Child 1: Lost.

Child 2: Hopeless.

Child 3: He shall be called Zacheriah!

Child 4: Zacheriah it is!

Liz: Zacheriah, do something for the good Lord's sake!

Zach: *(Takes a writing tablet and writes "His name is John." When the crowd reads it, they recoil, and Zach can speak.)*

Zach: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
he came and set his people free.
He set the power of salvation in the center of our lives,
and in the very house of David his servant,
Just as he promised long ago
through the preaching of his holy prophets:

Deliverance from our enemies
and every hateful hand;
Mercy to our fathers,
as he remembers to do what he said he'd do,
What he swore to our father Abraham—
a clean rescue from the enemy camp,
So we can worship him without a care in the world,
made holy before him as long as we live.
And you, my child, "Prophet of the Highest,"
will go ahead of the Master to prepare his ways,
Present the offer of salvation to his people,
the forgiveness of their sins.
Through the heartfelt mercies of our God,
God's Sunrise will break in upon us,
Shining on those in the darkness,
those sitting in the shadow of death,
Then showing us the way, one foot at a time,
down the path of peace.

Child 3: What will become of this child?

Child 4: Clearly, God has his hand in this.

(Lights fade as the crowd exits. Lights come up on Joseph and Jesus.)

Scene 4:

Joseph: So that's how his tongue was freed, and he hasn't stopped talking since!

Jesus: Uncle Zach does talk a lot. I think he must be making up for those 9 months he lost.

Joseph: Life continued for us. Your mom's tummy got bigger and bigger with you. *(gives him a little tickle)* And just before it was time for you to come, we had to go to Bethlehem for the census. It took us about a week to walk there with the camels, and when we got there, the inns were full, so we had to stay in a barn, which is where you were born.

Jesus: I was born in a barn?! I forgot that part!

Joseph: Your first bed was a box the horses ate their hay from. But we didn't care. You were in our arms and you were perfect. *(He gives Jesus a kiss on the head and gets up to go.)*

Jesus: What about the shepherds?

Joseph: *(Sighs.)* Jesus, it really is getting late.

Jesus: Da-ad, the shepherds are the best part!

Joseph: Ok. Ok. *(he sits back down)* There were shepherders camping in the neighbourhood. *(Low lights come up on shepherds camping with their sheep and dim on Jesus and Joseph)* They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. *Gabriel enters.*

Angel: Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Saviour has just been born in David's town, a Saviour who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.

(Use screen/powerpoint to bring up the choir and music singing. You could also use a real choir dressed in white. Then music/screen fades.)

All shepherds: Wow.

Child 1: I did not see that coming.

Child 2: That was

Child 3: amazing.

Child 4: Let's get to Bethlehem.

Child 5: Yeah, let's go!

(Shepherds and sheep run out, lights dim on on shepherds and come up on Jesus and Joseph.)

Scene 5:

Joseph: So they all showed up and told your mom and me about the angels, and the music, and that God was bringing bring peace to earth *(he pauses)* through you, *(he cracks)* my beautiful boy.

Jesus: *Jesus smiles at his dad.* Thanks dad. I really love that part with the shepherds.

Joseph gets up to leave.

Jesus: Can I have a drink of water?

Joseph: Good night Jesus.

Jesus: What about a snack?

Joseph: Good night.

Jesus: One more hug?

Joseph: See you in the morning.

(Lights dim further as Joseph leaves. Jesus gets out of this bed and kneels at his bed)

Jesus: God. Father. Thank you for my mom and dad here. I love them. Thank you for my life. It is yours. May your kingdom come, and your will be done. Amen.

(Jesus climbs back into bed, and the scene fades to darkness. Image of the star over the manger comes up to music then fades.)

The End.

A Word from the Author

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