

# Mary Jones and Her Bible

Not too many, many years ago the children in Wales did not go to school. They did not know about God's Messengers, not even about Jesus. This is the story about Mary Jones, a little girl, who helped to bring Bibles to Wales.

Mary lived with her parents at Llanfihangel. They were poor weavers, making sheep's wool into cloth to sell. There was no school nearby so Mary stayed at home helping her mother. She would feed the hens, collect eggs and do other hard work.

Preachers came to Wales to tell the people about God and the Bible. The Welsh people liked to hear how God, their Father, was looking after them and they went to the chapels every Sunday. Mary was quite young but she enjoyed going to chapel and tried to learn by heart many parts of the Bible. This is quite difficult to do. Her parents were very pleased but they wished they had a Bible of their own.

One day Mrs. Evans, from the farm, came to tell Mary that if she could learn to read then she could go to the farm to read her Bible. Mary prayed that it might be possible for her to learn.

In Bala, a town far away from Mary's village, lived the Reverend Thomas Charles. He was worried that the Welsh children had no schools. Adults and children worked hard and on Sundays there was nothing for them to do except fighting or drinking. He decided to open some schools. When Mary was 10 years old a school opened two miles away from her home and she was allowed to go, but she had to do her housework first.

Mary learnt quickly so that she could read Mrs. Evan's Bible. She had to walk to the farm but the kind lady always made her some tea.

Soon the teacher started a Sunday School especially to talk about the Bible. Mary never missed a lesson and she still worked hard at home. Now she longed for her own Bible and she decided to save hard for one. There were not many books in those days and they were very expensive. Her father made her a money box and Mary thought of ways she could earn money. She kept bees and sold the honey, did sewing, fetched firewood, sold eggs and took the village children out to play for an hour to help the mothers. After one year she had worked hard but she did not have enough money. Mary remembered that in the Bible it said if you have faith you can remove mountains. The cost of the Bible was like a mountain but Mary was sure she could find the money. One year she could only put one penny in the box because her father was ill and needed extra money to buy medicines. It took Mary six years before she had enough money.

No one nearby had a Bible for sale so Mary's teacher told her she should go to the Reverend Charles in Bala. It would take her a whole weekend to walk there and back and at first her parents did not want her to go. They decided it must be what God wanted so Mary prepared a parcel of food, her shawl and her money. She carried her shoes and walked bare footed over the mountains, reciting the Bible passages she knew.

"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." That means God's Word shows us the way we should take in life.

It was a long way and soon the mountains and villages were strange but she met kind folk along the way and late on Saturday she arrived in Bala at the house of a friend of her teacher.

He took her to the Reverend Charles early the next day and Mary told him her story. He was very touched by it but he had to tell her he had no Bibles left.

Poor Mary burst into tears and Reverend Charles decided she should not go home without one. He had in his bookcase one Bible that he had promised to someone. That person would have to wait a little longer.

Mary showed her parents her precious Bible when she got home and the whole village was happy for her; She read it every day and soon became a Sunday School teacher to help other children. The Reverend Charles told people in London about Mary and they decided to form a society that would collect money to print lots of Bibles for children all over the world.

Mary had a great desire to find out all she could about Jesus, God's Messenger, and what He had to say about how we should live our lives. She tried very hard even when it was not easy for her. The Messengers of God tell us that we are all looking for God in this way. Bahá'u'lláh tells us to imagine a great Valley where we must search for God.

"The steed of this Valley (Search) is patience; without patience the wayfarer on this journey will reach nowhere and attain no goal. Nor should he ever be downhearted; if he strive for a hundred thousand years and yet fail to behold the beauty of the Friend, he should not falter."

Can you find some words here that describe what Mary was like and some things that she did not do? You may need some help from an adult to tell you some of the meanings.