

The Light of the World

a Christmas program by Marcia Rice
from Sacred Literature Ministries

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THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD
Act I

Scene: (THE SCENE IS OUTDOORS WITH SNOW. A BACKGROUND DRAWING WITH THE WILLIAMS' CABIN DOOR ON ONE END AND THE MC KAY'S DOOR ON THE OTHER; HOMES AND TREES IN THE MIDDLE. BE SURE TO PUT TREES BETWEEN THE MC KAY'S HOME AND THE OTHERS. BECAUSE THEY ARE MENTIONED IN THE STORY.)

Opening: (ROBERT IS OUTSIDE WATCHING FOR CAROLERS TO ARRIVE. THE SOUND OF "JINGLE BELLS" CAN BE HEARD IN THE BACKGROUND, THEN CAROLERS COME FROM BACK OF STAGE SINGING "JINGLE BELLS" AND "HERE WE COME A-CAROLING." ROBERT RUNS TO THE DOOR AND OPENS IT EXCITEDLY.)

ROBERT: Hurry everybody; they're here! It's time to go!

(PAPA, CAROLYN, AND AMY COME OUT, DRESSED WARMLY.)

PAPA: Remember children, stay Close to Mama and me, and have a good time. Sing from your hearts, for this is a blessed time of year.

(CAROLERS HAVE ARRIVED AT THE FRONT DOOR AND FINISH SINGING AS MAMA STEPS OUT. CAROLERS ARE IN FAMILY GROUPS.)

CAROLER

FAMILY #1: Merry Christmas everyone! Are you ready to join us in singing Christmas cheer to our little woods?

MAMA: Indeed we are, and when we're through, everyone is invited for sandwiches and hot chocolate.

CAROLER

FAMILY #2: Oh, yum! That sounds good!

CAROLER

FAMILY #3: Hot chocolate will sure hit the spot after walking and singing in this cold air. Your generosity amazes me!

PAPA: The Lord has done so much for us and has given us His all, the very least we can do is show Him our appreciation by sharing what we have with others.

CAROLER

FAMILY #4: Ah, so true, brother. In spite of the bad crops this summer, our needs have been met well. None of us can be selfish, or complain.

(LITTLE CHILD TUGS AT HIS MOTHER'S SKIRT AS HE TALKS.)

LITTLE CHILD: When do we get to sing some more Mother?

PAPA: (laughingly) Right now little one! Let's make our woods ring with praises to the Christ of Christmas, and spread His joy to every home within our reach!

(THE CROWD WALKS TO EACH PICTURED LOG CABIN AND THROUGH THE WOODS, AND SINGS CAROLS OF YOUR CHOICE.)

CAROLER #1: This has certainly been good for my soul! Caroling relaxes a person, and has really put me in the Christmas spirit. I'm sad to see we've covered all the homes already.

CAROLER #2: There is another home up that hill. You can't see it for the trees. Those new foreigners live there. It wouldn't take long to get there, and perhaps it would make them feel welcome in our country.

CAROLER #3: It's really hard when you've come from the Old World. Everything seemed so hopeless and primitive to us until you fine people made America home for us. England has so much to offer, and unless you have friends, one would be tempted to want to go back.

(GROUP BEGINS SINGING ANOTHER CAROL AS THEY MOVE BY SOME OF THE TREES ON THE BACKGROUND DRAWING TO ANOTHER DOOR. MR. MC KAY OPENS HIS DOOR.)

MR. MC KAY: Don't stand there singing about joy! We're busy people and don't want to hear such nonsense! There's nothing joyous about this country anyway!

PAPA: We're singing because the Christ of Christmas gives joy in spite of the hard times, friend. We've come to be neighborly and would be willing to help make this country home for you too. My name is John Williams and ... (reaches to shake hands)

MR. MC KAY: I don't care who you are, and don't want neighbors. We don't need help, or people snooping around here. Good-bye! (slams door)

(CAROLERS LOOK AT EACH OTHER WITH SURPRISE. THEY SHRUG, SLOWLY TURN, AND BEGIN WALKING AWAY. LIGHTS GO OFF AND CURTAIN IS DRAWN.)

(MORE TREES ARE ADDED TO THE SAME SCENE WHILE THE CURTAIN IS DRAWN.)

Act II: Tree Cutting

Scene: (MEN ARE CARRYING AXES. CHILDREN ARE WAVING TO EACH OTHER AND ALL ARE EXAMINING TREES. OCCASIONALLY A CHILD WILL STOP AND THROW SNOWBALLS AT SOMEONE ELSE. ALL ARE HAVING A GOOD TIME AND LAUGHING. THEY STOP TO SING "THE HOLLY AND THE IVY"; SOME LEANING ON THEIR AXES, SOME SITTING OR LEANING ON STUMPS OR LOGS. AFTER SINGING, THEY WISH ONE ANOTHER A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND CARRY THEIR TREES OFF STAGE, LEAVING PAPA AND ROBERT ALONE.)

ROBERT: Look Papa! There's the perfect one! I can just see it at the "Lighting." Please Papa, Mama will love it and the girls will have such fun stringing popcorn for this tree!

(PAPA LOOKS OVER THE TREE, WALKING ALL AROUND IT, RUBBING HIS BEARD.)

PAPA: I believe you're right son. It has a beauty all it's own, and with your Mama's and sisters' handiwork done to it, it'll be a special tree.

(PICKS UP AX AND BEGINS CUTTING TREE. MR. MC KAY ENTERS.)

MR. MC KAY: Why do you have to cut these trees? It's such a waste! You know, some of us need firewood, and I could sell these trees. I have to feed my family you know, and these trees are how I make my extra cash. All morning, I've seen people carting off with trees. It's a lot of nonsense if you ask me!

PAPA: There aren't many families in this woods, Mr. Mc Kay. We'll use the wood for firewood when Christmas is over. It's a fine thing to use to make Christmas a little special.

MR. MC KAY: It's a waste of time and it's foolishness! Life is hard nowadays, and if you have a tree, then you have to have presents under it. Then you'll have to have extra food for a feast. One thing demands another. I don't have time for such foolishness! Frankly, I don't believe you do either. You lost your crop this year, and I heard at the general store that you have a family to care for too. You do this now, and you'll have to do it next year and every year. It's a lot of nonsense! You'll regret it; mark my word.

PAPA: Each to his own, Mr. Mc Kay. I look on Christmas as a blessed time of year and a privilege indeed. It's also another chance to teach my children of the goodness of God in giving His Son, Jesus, to us. My sacrifice of time and goods is so small, and His sacrifice for me was so great. I count Christmas as joy, and not a burden.

MR. MC KAY: Foolishness, that's what it is! I've no time for it, or for religion. (Begins to walk away and turns to warn mockingly.) Don't waste much more daylight on that tree. Looks like a storm's brewing again. It would be a pity to get caught in the woods and miss your decorating. (laughs)

ROBERT: No wonder Jamie is so mean. With a dad like that who could blame him. I bet Jamie doesn't even know what love is.

PAPA: Judge not, son, lest ye be judged. We don't know why the Mc Kays are like they are, or what they've been through. Let's pray that the love of God would be revealed to them, and that we'll be a testimony to that end.

ROBERT: Yes, Papa.

PAPA: We'd best hurry, clouds are getting darker, and it looks like it could snow again. It's much colder this deep in the woods. Even a little more snow would be dangerous.

(CURTAIN IS DRAWN AS PAPA AND ROBERT EXIT.)

Act III: Christmas Eve

Scene: (A HOME SCENE, A FIREPLACE IN THE BACK. THE GIRLS AND ROBERT ARE STRINGING POPCORN. MAMA IS COOKING AND THERE ARE SEVERAL BAKED GOODS ON THE TABLE. AMY GETS UP AND GOES TO THE WINDOW.)

AMY: It's still snowing hard, and there is no sign of Papa. I do wish he'd come soon.

CAROLYN: Don't worry Amy, God will take care of him.

AMY: I don't know why Papa went anyway. The Mc Kays have been mean to us and everyone. They don't want us to help them. Why should Papa have gone today?

MAMA: Now Amy, you saw the Mc Kay's home. This storm is much too bad for such an unfinished house. They might freeze to death unless Papa can get them to a warmer place. The door on their cabin isn't sturdy enough, and their windows will not keep the cold out.

AMY: Papa offered to help them before it got so cold. It serves them right.

MAMA: Amy, that's enough!

ROBERT: Papa says not to be harsh towards them. Yesterday he said we should pray for them and show them the love of Christ through our lives.

CAROLYN: I want to help them and I really feel sorry for Sally Ann. But if Papa brings them here, they'll probably ruin our Christmas. They criticize everyone and everything, and Christmas is so special. It only comes once a year.

MAMA: Perhaps they've never felt the love of Christ, or known of His gift to us. Don't grieve the Holy Spirit, or quench His power because of bad attitudes children. Robert, get the Bible and read I Corinthians 13.

(ROBERT GETS THE BIBLE OFF STAND AND READS THE ENTIRE CHAPTER SLOWLY, CLEARLY AND WITH FEELING.)

MAMA: You see children, our lives should be ruled by Christ's love. If a Christian is anything at all, he should portray this love in his life. Remember, if we have compassion, it can be used by God to make the difference. Let's set a watch before our mouths, attitudes and actions, and purpose not to sin against God.

AMY: I'm sorry Mama, it's just so hard sometimes.

MAMA: (stooping to kiss Amy) I know little one. But when that happens, just think how much Christ loved you to give up His home in heaven, be born in a lowly manger, and die to pay for your sins. Carolyn, read Matthew 5:13-16.

(CAROLYN READS MATTHEW 5:13-16.)

MAMA: Christians must be different to be used of God. How I pray that each of you will be like good salt, and that you'll let your lights shine for the Mc Kays. Can you do that for Christ?

CHILDREN: Yes, Mother.

(MOTHER GOES BACK TO WORK AND CHILDREN GATHER BUNDLES AND WRAP BOXES. AMY SITS BY THE WINDOW. THEY SING "BRING A TORCH CHILDREN.")

AMY: They're here! Papa's home! Oh, I'm so glad. Papa! Papa!

(EVERYONE RUNS TO THE DOOR AND HELPS PAPA AND THE MC KAY FAMILY IN. ROBERT TAKES THEIR COATS. CAROLYN PUTS MORE WOOD IN THE FIRE, MAMA GETS BOWLS OF HOT SOUP ON THE TABLE. AMY HOLDS PAPA'S HAND AND LEADS THEM TO THE TABLE.)

MAMA: We're thankful you're all here safe and warm. You'll be a special addition to our Christmas festivities.

MRS. MC KAY: We really aren't prepared for Christmas. I'm afraid we'll be in the way for you. You go on with what you want to do and forget us. We weren't planning on Christmas anyway.

PAPA: Nonsense! We've plenty for everyone. Come and join us as we decorate the tree.

CAROLYN: Come on Sally, wait till you see the tree decorated! Best of all, you'll get to be here for the "Lighting" tomorrow morning!

(CAROLYN GRABS SALLY'S HAND AND ALL OTHERS GO TO HELP WITH THE DECORATING, SOON, EVEN MR. MC KAY IS JOINING IN THE FUN AND LAUGHING.)

AMY: It's time for the stockings. Let's hang the stockings!

(THE MC KAYS LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND TRY TO STEP BACK IN THE BACK OF THE ROOM.)

ROBERT: Here Jamie, here's one for you! You can hang it by mine. Bet I wake up first and beat you to see what's inside!

(JAMIE GRINS AND HAPPILY TAKES THE STOCKING AND HANGS IT BY ROBERT'S.)

JAMIE: Bet you don't! I've never had one before, and I'll not sleep for wondering what to expect.

PAPA: Here's each of you a stocking. Hurry now!

(HANDS MRS. MC KAY AND SALLY ONE. BUT MR. MC KAY REFUSES HIS.)

PAPA: Let's all have a merry Christmas this year.

(MR. MC KAY LAUGHS AND ACCEPTS THE STOCKING AND WALKS ACROSS THE ROOM TO HANG HIS STOCKING BY THE REST OF THEM. THE CHILDREN JOIN HANDS AND SING "IN A MANGER." THEN PAPA SITS DOWN AND BEGINS TO READ THE CHRISTMAS STORY FROM LUKE 2:1-6, STOPPING AT "AND SO IT WAS." PIANO SOFTLY PLAYS "IN A MANGER" AS NARRATOR SPEAKS.)

NARRATOR: It was with surprise and wonder that the Mc Kays listened to the story. They heard how the very Son of God gave up His throne in heaven to be born in the lowly manger with no crib blankets, clothing, or glory to meet His coming. They could feel the holiness of that child Who was born so long ago with only sheep, cattle and mules to welcome Him into our world. The coldness of the hearts of the people of that day reminded them grimly of their own coldness and indifference, and they compared the Williams family to the shepherds who paused from their own hard lives to recognize with joy, the Saviour. With heads bent in shame, they listened as they heard how wicked men plotted to end this child's life and mission on earth, even before He could grow up and accomplish it. They remembered their own flight from the Old World, as they listened to the account of Joseph taking the babe and His mother at night into a strange country. (Pause while piano plays "At the Cross" and begin again at the chorus.) Wiping the tears from their eyes, they listened of the sacrifice of His own perfect life, bearing the price of the sins of all mankind as He stumbled up the hill of Calvary, and was crucified, providing salvation to those who would but believe. With wonder they listened to the evidence of His glorious resurrection.

As Papa closed his Bible and began to pray, the Mc Kays' hearts quaked and yearned to have this kind of life - this hope. But could it be true? Could it be possible for them after all their indifference, and yes, even hatred?

(SLOWLY, THE FAMILIES RISE.)

MAMA: It's time for bed children. Sleep well.

AMY: Tomorrow is the "Lighting"! I thought the time would never come!

(CURTAINS CLOSE AS EVERYONE WISHES EACH OTHER A RESTFUL NIGHT.)

Act IV: The Lighting

Scene: (IT'S CHRISTMAS MORNING. MANY PACKAGES ARE UNDER THE TREE THAT HAVE BEEN WRAPPED IN BROWN PAPER, PAINTED OR COLORED, AND WRAPPED WITH RIBBONS. NO STORE BOUGHT PAPER, TINSEL OR DECORATIONS ARE PRESENT. EVERYBODY IS EXCITED, AS THEY COME IN AND GO TO THEIR STOCKINGS AND BRING OUT GOODIES. THE MC KAYS BEGIN TO ACT UNCOMFORTABLE, AS THEY RECEIVE SUCH GENEROSITY.)

PAPA: Good morning everybody, and merry Christmas! It's finally time for the "Lighting"!

(EACH OF THE WILLIAMS FAMILY JOIN HANDS AND GRAB THE HESITANT MC KAY'S HANDS AND FORM A CIRCLE AROUND THE TREE.)

PAPA: Always remember, children, the light of the world is Jesus, and without Him and His work on the cross, there is no light. We would be still living in darkness.

(PAPA THEN BEGINS TO LIGHT THE CANDLES ON THE TREE AND SINGS A VERSE OF "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS." THE FAMILY JOINS IN ON THE CHORUS. PAPA THEN QUOTES:)

PAPA: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ...The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. ...For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

(PAPA HANDS THE LIGHTER TO MAMA, WHO BEGINS TO LIGHT CANDLES.)

MAMA: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. ...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. ...But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

(ROBERT RECEIVES THE LIGHTER AND BEGINS TO LIGHT.)

ROBERT: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

(THE LIGHTER IS HANDED TO CAROLYN.)

CAROLYN: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

(AMY REACHES FOR THE LIGHTER.)

AMY: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

PAPA: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

ALL: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve."

MR. MC KAY: I have never heard such a wonderful message. I really need to have my sins forgiven, and I'd like to have this light in my life!

MRS. MC KAY: I want it too. Now I know that I need Christ's blood to cover my sins.

JAMIE: Wait for me. I want to be saved too!

SALLY: Mama and Papa, I asked Jesus into my heart last night, but I realize now that I should tell everyone about it.

PAPA: Mr. Mc Kay, would you lead your family to the foot of the cross, and pray?

(THE THREE MC KAYS KNEEL AND BOW HEADS AND ONE BY ONE RAISE UP AGAIN.)

PAPA: I do believe there's a gift under the tree for everyone. Merry Christmas everyone!

(EVERYONE TAKES A GIFT FROM UNDER THE TREE AS ALL OTHER ACTORS COME ONSTAGE HUMMING "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS.")

NARRATOR: To fully realize the joy of Christmas, you must know the Christ of Christmas. We truly wish you all a very merry Christmas, and a joyous new year with the peace of God that passeth all understanding in your hearts, and may you each have the light of the world, Jesus, as your own personal Saviour and Lord. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve!"

(CURTAIN CLOSES AS STUDENTS SING, "WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS.")

The author put on the play with Scene I in the foreground of the stage and Scene II in the stage rear. This makes it simple to remove Scene I and have Scene II up and ready for presentation.

The play can be put on with very few props. Heavy coats and scarves can give the impression that you are outdoors, even as the lack of them can give the opposite idea. Several cardboard pine trees or artificial Christmas trees can add to the outdoor feeling. A table and chair can represent the inside of a home.

The actions of the players can take the place of many props. They can open imaginary doors, make and throw imaginary snowballs, and mix up Christmas goodies with an imaginary bowl and spoon.

The play can be produced on any budget, in any place, when you let your imagination and ingenuity go to work.