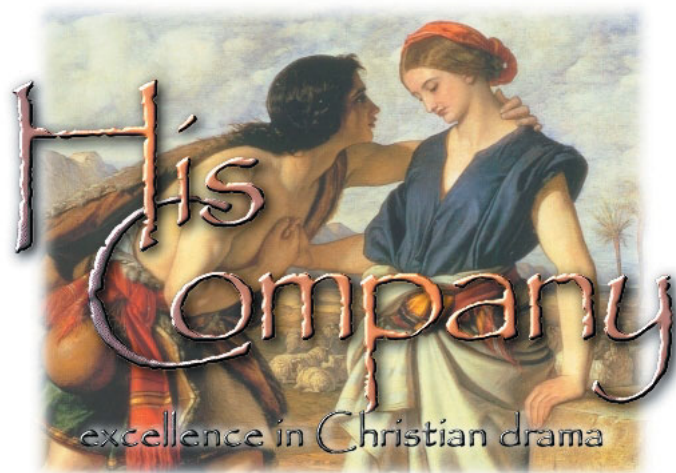


VACANCY

...FOR WITH THE HEART MAN BELIEVES. (ROMANS 10:10)

A ONE-ACT PLAY FOR CHRISTMAS

by
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Technical Notes

- 20 This play requires three separate areas of the stage—none of which need be very large.
- ♦ The first area is for the “Leader”, who, in modern dress, represents the standpoint and perspective of today. He or she stands in our own time and speaks for modern man.
 - ♦ The second area is for the two mysterious Visitors who stand outside of time. They may be angels, or some other sort of supernatural being. We don’t really know. But they need
25 to be isolated physically from the other two areas—ideally, higher, such as in an organ speaker chamber or high baptistery. In the original production, each Visitor was set in one of two high organ chambers—one on either side of the stage. They stood behind fabric screens with their faces (only) carefully lit by spots situated within the organ chambers. With the rest of the organ chamber black, and the Visitor dressed in black
30 except for the head, this left them invisible to the audience when house or normal stage lights were up. But when these lights were out, and the organ chamber lights up, their seemingly disembodied heads became visible to the audience. If two matching areas such as this are not available, the two Visitors could be placed together in one space.
 - ♦ The third area is for the drama itself, and can be any portion of the stage that is clearly
35 set apart from the other two.

Lighting is important to this production. The drama needs to be lighted as you would any play and requires blackouts. The “Visitors” require dark, mysterious lighting and black
40 backgrounds so that, ideally, they are simply bodiless faces looking out of the darkness. If the director decides against a dark setting for the Visitors, it is still important that whatever the treatment, they remain mysterious, and set out of time. Smooth transitions (crossfades) are needed between the three areas.

The Script

45 The Scene divisions in this script are for rehearsal purposes only, and should not be included in a printed program.

Set & Wardrobe

The Leader needs no set—except that he or she may be supplied a stool to sit on during the dramatic scenes—and should be dressed comfortably modern, such as “business casual.”
50 [Note: Even when not “on,” the Leader should remain in character, watching the scenes being played out for his or her benefit.]

The Visitors (depending on the director’s approach) need no set, and should be shrouded in black, leaving only the head exposed.

The drama set consists of the interior of the front room of the Bethlehem inn, with a window in one wall and a door that opens out onto the main street. Set pieces within the interior are
55 left to the director’s discretion.

Characters

60 The play opens with the **Leader**, who is a combination worship leader, narrator, and
character. More than that, he or she represents believing, contemporary humanity—with all
its faith and doubts, joy and cynicism. This person has a strong, yet comfortable stage
presence that flows easily from speaking *to* the audience, to speaking *for* them. Though this
65 person is a narrator, as it were, he or she remains in character throughout, as someone
paying attention to the scenes being played out.

Two characters who set this play apart from the rest are the mysterious **Visitors**. It is left to
the imagination of the director to specify—if he or she so chooses—just what these beings
are. They may be angels; they may not. It doesn't really matter. They are simply two
supernatural beings that stand astride time—able to dwell in the present, as well as to
70 conjure up the past and see into the future.

Simon, the innkeeper, is the disturbing picture of today's upwardly mobile, self-absorbed,
Type A individual. While he does love his family, his behavior rarely shows it. His true
passion is for the game and challenge of making profit, and he is mostly blind to his failings.
In spite of these, Simon is lovably obnoxious; he is a good man misguided.

75 Simon's wife, **Joanna**, is the calm amidst her husband's storm. She is obedient when it
comes to helping run the inn, but she is still opinionated, and always ready to point out her
husband's failings.

Their son, **Nathanael**, is a good and dutiful son of around 12 years of age whose real goal in
life is to please his father.

80 **Eliezer**, their next-door neighbor, is an older man of solid reputation. In contrast to his friend
Simon, he has not given up on the promises of the God of their fathers.

Scene One

With house lights still up, lights up on Leader.

Leader

85 *(to the audience)*

Welcome. We've gathered tonight to remember and rejoice in the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Long ago the Son of God left His heavenly peace to bring that peace down to man. He who created the world emptied Himself of all privilege, took on the
90 likeness of men, and came to them—came as a baby, with open arms filled with love. He came to dwell in their hearts—those hearts that would have Him. And from that one, glorious day, until this day, He has known rejection as men and women have shut their hearts to Him.

(pause)

95 Long ago the prophets proclaimed His coming. They painted word-portraits of the Savior so that the people would clearly know the day of His arrival. Isaiah said it best:

“Arise, shine; for your light has come. And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the
100 peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.”

What a wonderful thought: That the glory of the Lord has actually come, and is now shining on us.

105 *(pause; soberly)*

But I wonder if we see that light? The light of Christ rarely penetrates the smog of our humanity. Our world today is filled with the tarnished light of our own brilliance. And never more so than during this festive time of year. Plastic Santas and aluminum trees greet us in every shop of the mall...

110

Visitor #1*(a disembodied voice)*

And do you think it was so different back then?

Leader

Back when?

115

(beat)

Who said that?

Lights up on Visitors.**Visitor #2**

Back when Jesus came to this world for the first time.

120

Leader

They had shopping malls in 4 BC?

Visitor #1*(impatiently)*

125

No. But people were just as preoccupied with their own problems and the distractions of living. In those days the people, too, had little time for “peace, and goodwill toward men.”

Leader

But they didn’t have the incredible pressures we have. Business deals and deadlines and mortgages...

130

Visitor #1

Oh really.

House lights down slowly.**Lights down on Leader; up only on Visitors.**

135

Visitor #2

Bethlehem was a small, inconspicuous town lying just short of a day's journey south of the city of Jerusalem. It was a sleepy little village, tucked away and forgotten by most; nothing flashy, a bit disheveled.

Visitor #1

140

Few people ever visited by choice. Time and trends had passed it by, disregarded and even held in contempt by some—until one day the mighty despot called for a census to be taken of all the people in all his conquered lands.

Visitor #2

145

In the village was a small inn, unimpressive and tattered, worn down by time, home for the village innkeeper and his wife and son.

Visitor #1

150

From the large room facing the street they conducted their business. This room more than any other was home for the innkeeper as he welcomed new guests and dispensed with the old.

Visitor #2

The mighty despot was Caesar Augustus; and the village innkeeper was called Simon.

Lights transition from Visitors to Drama.

155

Lights down on Visitors.

Scene Two

Lights up on drama set.

160 *Enter Simon, an Innkeeper of Bethlehem. He has been frantically scurrying about for days because of the Roman Census. While he continues his grumbling about the hated Romans, he has no complaints about the money he has been raking in from their Census.*

Enter his wife, Joanna, right behind him.

Simon

Where is that boy? I sent him an hour ago.

165

Joanna

Should I go look for him?

Simon

No time! No time! Get back upstairs and see if anyone is ready to leave.

Joanna

170 But what difference does it make? If the room's occupied, why look for another?

Simon

(taking her quickly down stage; secretively)

175 Sssshh...! Each time one leaves I raise the rate! We're making a killing off this census.

Joanna

(shocked)

But Simon—that's dishonest!

Simon

180 Listen, those filthy Romans have been bleeding us for every denarius. If they hand me a chance to make some of it back, well, I'm going to take it.

Joanna

But it's our people you're taking it from.

185

Simon

(failing a rejoinder; turning away)

Where is that boy? He should have been back long ago.

Joanna

190 He may have stopped to see one of his friends. You've been working him awfully hard these last few days.

Simon

Much to be done.

Joanna

195 You worry me, Simon. I've never seen you like this.

Simon

(impatiently; wishing she would get busy)

Must I do everything around here?

Joanna

200

(firmly)

Now you just sit down here and take a break. The world won't pass you by if you rest for a moment.

Simon

(reluctantly sitting; wearily)

205 Why do you fight me so? It's all for the family.

Joanna

But this isn't my husband: running around, squeezing every drop of profit from his neighbors...

Simon

210 They're not our neighbors. These people are coming all the way down from Galilee. We aren't the ones forcing them to stay in our town.

Joanna

But we don't have to cheat them.

215

Simon

And where's the difference? When the harvest is poor, the price of wheat is high; when the harvest is good, the price is lower. Simple economics,
 220 Joanna. The law of the marketplace.

Joanna

So tell me, my husband the banker, why is it your harvest is good and your prices remain high?

Simon

225 *(once again, without rejoinder)*
 Where is that boy?

Joanna

Uh huh.

230 *Enter their son Nathanael, with their neighbor, Eliezer. Nathanael is carrying a basket of bread.*

Eliezer

(generously)

I had to return with Nathanael, to compliment his father on his son's bargaining skills. Quite amazing in one so young.

235 *(with a twinkle)*

I wonder where he learned them.

Nathanael hands the basket of bread to his mother, but speaks to his father.

Nathanael

(proudly)

240 I did good, papa.

Simon

And what did Eliezer's fine bread cost us today?

Nathanael

Only three shekels.

245 **Simon**

Three shekels! Why, that's robbery! I would have paid no more than two.

(to Eliezer)

Why such a high price to your neighbor?

Eliezer

250 *(innocently)*

Many new customers in town. My poor wife is kept busy with the orders.

Simon

So with all the orders you can afford to lower the price.

Eliezer

255 *(slyly)*

This census won't last forever.

Simon

(stepping closer to Eliezer)

No, but your greed probably will.

260 **Joanna**

(quickly intervening)

Stop it you two!

(sarcastically; to her husband)

Simon, what is one shekel when the harvest is good? It's the law of the

265 marketplace—simple economics.

Nathanael

(contritely)

It's good bread, papa.

Simon

270 *(affectionately, but with some reluctance; embarrassed by the truth)*

You made a good bargain, son. I couldn't have done better myself. Now go help your mother put the bread away.

Joanna and Nathanael exit.

Eliezer

275 *(after they have left)*

He's a good boy, Simon.

Simon

The God of Abraham has been generous. Now if He would just see to these filthy Romans.

280 *(with great bitterness)*
They stain this land with the blood of our own people. They count our heads like sheep, so they can gouge us for more taxes.

Eliezer

And make you rich in the bargain.

285 **Simon**

If the Lord of Israel will turn His back on our sorrow, then we'll have to survive on our own.

Eliezer

You have no patience, Simon.

290 **Simon**
(darkly)

Patience will get us killed.

Eliezer
(chiding)

295 No one is getting killed.

Simon

No... but the Roman taxes bleed us dry.

Eliezer
(firmly)

300 Messiah. Messiah will come.

Simon

Sure. Here we go with all the old prophecies. How many years? How long must we wait for our Messiah?

Eliezer

305 There is no peace for one so angry with God.

Simon
(emphatically)

The Romans are systematically taking everything from us...

Eliezer

310 Everything but our faith.

(with a sigh)

But I see they have now taken even that from you, Simon.

Simon

315 What good is a prophet's story of a Savior when people are in chains? What
do we tell our children when they ask about Messiah? How do we cover up
the reality of today?

Eliezer

The Lord heard our fathers in Egypt; He hears us, too. Today's reality leads us
to our God—not away from Him.

320

Simon

(with mild contempt)

The Romans have weakened you.

Eliezer

(firmly)

325 No. They've strengthened my faith.

(pause)

The Lord will choose the day of Messiah. It'll not be the Romans and it will
not be us who choose. Simon, it is your faith that has been weakened by the
decrees of a Caesar. Our God is God! He is the God who led our fathers out of
330 Egyptian slavery—and He is the God who will deliver us from our bondage.

Lights down on drama set.

Scene Three**Lights up on Visitor #2**

335

Visitor #2

That night, after the evening meal, two weary travelers knocked at the closed door of the Bethlehem inn. It had been a full day for Simon—so he sent his wife to answer.

Lights down on Visitor #2.

340

Lights up on drama set.**Simon**

Tell them we're full up! And that they've got a lot of nerve even trying at this late hour.

Joanna

345

(speaking to someone just outside their door)

I'm sorry, but we have no more room.

(pause, listening to them)

One moment.

(closing the door; to Simon)

350

Simon, she's pregnant. We must find a room for them.

Simon

(emphatically)

There's not one room left.

Joanna

355

(opening the door; to the people outside)

I'm sorry. Maybe there will be something tomorrow.

(she listens to them again)

Excuse me.

(closing the door; to Simon)

360

Where is your heart? Surely we have something for them.

Simon

How else can I say it? No room!

(pause)

Unless...

365

Joanna

Unless they can pay extra, right?

Simon

I can be... persuaded, by certain—

Joanna

370

(disgusted with her husband)

I can see that these people have no money—and the woman is near her time.

Simon

(bombastically)

375

Charity! Always charity. This is a business—not a charity. People give us money, and we give them a room for the night.

(sarcastically)

Do you see how it works?

Joanna

380

(angry)

All I see is your empty heart.

(opening the door as she grabs a lamp; to the people outside)

Come with me. I'll put you up in the stable tonight. At least you'll be warm.

385

As Joanna exits, Simon, with a satisfied smirk on his face, returns to what he had been doing. But as he looks around the empty room his smug attitude turns to an uneasy loneliness.

Lights down slowly on drama set, as the Visitors refer to Simon during the next scene.

Scene Four

390 **Lights up on Visitors.**

Visitor #1

Poor Simon. How important he has become to himself.

Visitor #2

He keeps the walls of his life very close, doesn't he.

395 **Lights up on Leader.**

Leader

(to the Visitors)

Was that Mary... and Joseph?

Visitor #2

400 It's about to happen.

Leader

They seem so very much alone.

Visitor #1

This is a great and terrible thing happening to them. But soon He will be
405 born.

Leader

Is Mary well?

Visitor #2

She's young, but strong. God's hand is upon her.

410

Leader

How can she bear the wonder of it all? How could any woman? To give birth
to the Son of God!

Visitor #1

Is there so much difference? Is not the hand of God in every birth. Is not the
415 wonder of God in every new life.

Leader

I'm not sure I could have her faith.

Visitor #2

She loves her God enough to obey Him—to become His servant.

420

Visitor #1

She opened the door of her heart.

Leader

And He walked right in.

Visitor #2425 There's the wonder.*(pause)*

But now Joseph was another matter.

Visitor #1

Oh my, yes.

430

Leader

Why do you say that?

Visitor #2

Well for one thing, he was a man.

Leader

435

(with mild sarcasm)

Really.

Visitor #2

All he got were explanations. For Mary it was happening inside her—she could feel the power of God in her.

440

Visitor #1

Joseph was running on pure faith and trust...

Visitor #2

...and obedience.

Visitor #1

445 The Holy Spirit had permeated the heart of Mary...

Visitor #2

...but Joseph was left with a greater helping of his own logic.

Visitor #1

450

(wryly)

A dangerous habit for humans.

Leader

455

I have to hand it to Joseph: he had a lot of pressure from society to do just about anything but what he did. He must have been very confused at times—
to wonder why God would put him in such a position.

Visitor #1

Yes, Joseph had his moments of doubt and confusion.

Visitor #2

Most humans would.

460

Visitor #1

Then it was time for Jesus to be born. And the heart of Joseph could only open to receive the love God was pouring into his life.

(pause; with a chuckle)

Then there was our friend Simon...

465

Lights down on Visitors.

Scene Five

Lights up on drama set as Simon enters.

Simon

470 *(shouting upstairs)*
...and hold it down up there! You born in a barn?

Nathanael

(entering excitedly)
Father, they're asking for more wine. And there is no more.

Simon

475 *(as if angry at his son)*
But I just refilled the jug! Where'd it all go?

(realizing it's not his son's fault; beginning to get a headache over all this)
Well, try at Saul's house. Maybe they have some to spare. And hurry—

480 *(sarcastically)*
—can't keep our guests waiting. Oh yes, if you run into your mother, tell her I would appreciate her help one of these days.

As Nathanael exits, Eliezer, enters excited and slightly out of breath.

Eliezer

485 Simon, this is a most curious night—a most curious night.

Simon

What's the matter, your wife run out of flour? Don't come crying to me.

Eliezer

Can't you feel the excitement in the air?

Simon

490 The only thing I feel in the air is the breath of two drunken soldiers in one of my rooms.

Eliezer

(suddenly uneasy)
495 Soldiers?

Simon

It's not bad enough they have to push us around in the streets. Now they're staying in my own house!

500

Eliezer

But they're camped outside town. What are they doing in here?

Simon

They've brought more soldiers in because of the census. The story is they ran out of officer billets, so I'm stuck with them for the night.

505

Eliezer

(turning quickly to go)

Then I'll be on my way.

Simon

(stopping him)

510

Wait a minute.

Eliezer

I'm not hanging around with them in here.

Simon

They're too drunk to bother with us. What did you come here for?

515

Eliezer

(relaxing)

Simon, don't you know what's going on out there?

Simon

Out where?

520

Eliezer

Out in the town.

Simon

Somebody has to stay here and see to business. Joanna took off with two customers more than an hour ago—and never came back!

525

Eliezer

Practically the whole town is out in the streets. There's something almost magical going on out there.

Simon*(taking his friend by the arms, with mock solemnity)*

530 It's been a rough day. You've been working too hard, Eliezer.

Eliezer*(dismissively)*

Don't be silly. Come out and see for yourself.

Simon

535 What is it? Did I miss another feast day.

Eliezer

I can't explain it.

(staring out the window)

540 Something's happened, and suddenly—we're all friends again. It seems that for so long all of us have been caught up in business and taxes and this crazy census.

(rhetorically)

What happened to us? When did we stop being who we were, and become what we are now?

545 *(troubled)*

Yesterday Josiah the merchant swindled me out of a day's worth of bread, and there was no shame in his eyes.

(ashamed)

550 Earlier today I sold a two-shekel basket of bread to your son for three, and I felt no shame in it.

(pause; turning back to Simon)

555 But this evening there's a new spirit traveling up and down the streets. We can trust again—but I don't know why. It's as if we've all suddenly awakened from a bad dream. People are once again neighbors—neighbors are once again friends. There's an expectation all about us—

(turning back to peer through the window)

and I don't know why?

Simon

560 Listen, I've been thinking about what you said before—about the Messiah—
and, you're right.

Eliezer registers shock.

Simon

(continuing)

565 No, I mean it. A Jew is just another man without his faith. We must be united
against our common enemy—and in our hope for the Redeemer.

Eliezer

(with amazement)

This is a magical night.

570

Simon

I'm just bullheaded, Eliezer.

(glancing up)

He made me that way.

(pause)

575 He understands.

Eliezer

Come with me outside.

Simon

I'll stay for any new customers.

580

Eliezer

(gently pleading)

Simon...

Simon

You could find Joanna for me, though. It's time she was in for the night.

585

Eliezer

All right, my friend.

Eliezer exits.

Simon returns to his business, but then, noticing something outside, moves to the window.

590

Simon*(looking outside)*

Is there a full moon tonight?

Lights down slowly on drama set.

Lights up on Visitors.

595

Visitor #1

And then, back in the dark recesses of a dingy stable, the child is about to be born.

Visitor #2

600

Crouch down as we slip into the dark cave, crouch down so you won't bump your head on the low, rough entrance.

Visitor #1

605

And watch your step: it is, after all, a shelter for animals. The cramped space is thick with the dusty mix of hay and ancient rock. What little oxygen there is, is heavy with the acrid aroma of manure and urine. The bleating of lambs and the baritone lowing of cattle are in marked contrast to the stillness of the Bethlehem night outside.

Visitor #2

610

Over in the corner, before a mounded bed of hay, Joseph kneels next to his wife—who is struggling through the pains of childbirth. Before we turn away, to permit them their privacy, we see that Mary is quite young, and this is surely her first child. It will be hard for her, the labor will be long and intense. Before she delivers and forgets the pain, it will be great.

Visitor #1

615

She cries out. Her husband mutters comfort and encouragement. There is no midwife, and we haven't one with us; all we can do is pray that the child will be healthy and that the mother will survive the birth.

Visitor #2

Finally, after long hours of labor, the young woman delivers a fine boy-child with healthy lungs. He gurgles and gasps for breath, then releases that breath

620 again in quavering, rhythmic wails that bring weary smiles to the faces of his
parents.

Visitor #1

As Joseph lifts the child up and places him to Mary's breast, we silently
approach and stare with reverent wonder.

625

Visitor #2

And there He is, the Son of God, one-third of the fellowship of God, agent of
Creation.

Lights down slowly on Visitors.

Scene Six

630 **Lights up on drama set.**

Simon is seen pacing, waiting for Joanna.

Joanna

(bursting in with great excitement)

Simon! The most marvelous thing has happened!

635

Simon

I expected you hours ago.

Joanna

He's here! He's finally come!

Simon

640

(deaf to his wife; continuing with his own agenda; pouting)

I've been here all by myself, you know—and with two Roman soldiers overhead.

Joanna

(more firmly)

645

Simon! Messiah! Messiah has come!

Simon

(hearing her for the first time)

Not you too. Have you been talking to Eliezer?

Joanna

650

I've been at the stable, with Joseph and Mary—those are their names.

Simon

Who?

Joanna

655

Mary and Joseph — the couple I took to the stable because you said we had no more room.

(pause)

What soldiers?

Simon

660 The two passed out upstairs.

Joanna

Oh, I see how it is. A nice couple about to have a baby and there's no room.
Two soldiers of the state and suddenly there's a vacancy.

Simon

665 They had swords, you know.

Joanna

Simon, listen to me. There are miracles taking place out there and you're still worried about business.

Simon

670 Fine. Next time you can tell the soldiers we have no accommodations. Until Messiah comes and does away with these Romans, we have to play by their rules.

Joanna

(exasperated)

675 But He has! And right here in Bethlehem!

Simon

Who?

Joanna

(getting very frustrated)

680 The baby! He's the one!

Simon

(you've got to be kidding)

The Messiah? Come on...

Joanna

685 If you'd ever get your nose out of your accounts receivable you might notice what's going on around you! The Redeemer of our people has just been born under your roof—and all you can feel is the weight of Roman oppression.

(taking his hand)

Come with me, and see the future in a baby's eyes.

690

Simon

A baby? You're putting a baby up against the power of Rome?

Joanna*(seriously)*

For this baby, Caesar himself would be no challenge.

695

Simon

You're talking nonsense.

Joanna*(angry)*

All right.

700

(beginning to leave)

You stay here and live with a past that's already passed you by. I choose the hope resting in that stable.

Simon*(not wanting her to go, but afraid to give in)*

705

What can be so special about a little baby?

Joanna*(seriously; with intensity)*

Only that He was announced by the angels of heaven, and people from all corners are coming to worship Him.

710

(with wonder)

Strangers are coming to Bethlehem to worship this little baby. Explain that.

Simon

How can I explain lunacy?

Joanna

715

Why do you resist the answer to all your prayers?

(very angry)

Must God present Himself to you in person?

Simon

That would be a nice touch.

720

Joanna

Well, mister know-it-all, I believe He has! There is a little baby just born in a stall of our stable—born there because you turned away his parents earlier tonight.

725 *(with exuberant joy; leading Simon out with her)*

Simon, His eyes shine with the wisdom of God, and perfect strangers are presenting themselves to Him.

They exit together.

Lights down on drama set.

730 **Scene Seven**

Lights up on Visitors.

Visitor #2

And finally the wise men came to give him honor. Visitors from faraway lands, they sought the one announced by the glory of heaven.

735

Visitor #1

They came with their gifts: Gold, Frankincense, Myrrh... But the greatest gift they brought was their worship. Before all, they acknowledged that this was indeed the Messiah—the Son of God.

Visitor #2

740 And once again, Jesus the Christ entered the hearts of men. Those who earlier had worshipped the charts of stars and crystal balls, opened their hearts to the child of the Holy Spirit.

Visitor #1

745 They now worshipped the Savior—incarnate God—and their lives would be forever changed.

Lights down on Visitors

Scene Eight

Lights up on drama set.

750 *Enter Simon, thoughtfully.*

Simon

(with a slow, deliberate pace; to himself)

Have I seen Messiah? Could this little child really be the One? He's too small
for a king. But they say He is. The shepherds say this child is the Savior—the
755 Christ. This baby. Oh, what do they know—they're only shepherds. Spend
their lives with sheep!

(desperately)

What do they know? How can it be? How can one so small solve all the
problems of such a big world?

760 *(laughing almost derisively)*

Forget the world—solve my problems! What can He do for me?

(frustrated)

And why is He still in my mind?

Enter Joanna.

765

Simon

(to Joanna)

You knew all along.

Joanna

I told you, Simon.

770

Simon

(distantly; more to himself)

But no one speaks more clearly than the Savior Himself.

(surprised at himself for saying 'Savior')

Listen to me! He's just a baby!

775

Joanna

No! He's so much more. You heard the shepherds—you saw the star—you can feel God's presence in that child. Why do you still resist?

780

Simon*(blurting out)*

Because I can't bear the thought that it's going to be that easy!

Joanna*(confused)*

785 For what?

Simon*(expansively)*

I wanted God to sweep his arm down and wipe my enemies off the face of the earth! I wanted Him to send a triumphant king to conquer the Romans and lift us to the power we once knew!

790

(quieter; after taking a breath)

I wanted God to send a comforting wind that would somehow... change my life.

Joanna

795

(softly)

I think He has.

(pause)

We don't see it—we can't. We can't see what that baby will become. But Simon, there is a wind, and it's blowing through Bethlehem tonight. And you've felt it—you can already feel the change taking place.

800

Simon*(seriously)*

Yes. And it frightens me.

Joanna

805 It's what you've been looking for all along.

Simon*(thoughtfully)*

I can feel the old ways slipping away. And it frightens me.

Joanna

810 Yes, I know. It's so easy to cling to the comfort of our imperfections. But I think what you're feeling—what we're both feeling—is the redemption of that child entering our hearts.

Simon

Well, if that's what it is—there're a lot of layers for it to go through.

815

Joanna

But you can feel it.

Simon

(after a moment; thoughtfully)

In the stable, when I looked down into that manger, I looked into His eyes,
820 and it was the most amazing thing. I remember when Nathanael was just born—his eyes, like most children, seemed to be a blank slate, waiting for something to be written there. There was life, but no knowledge, no experience.

But when I looked at the child tonight, He looked right back at me—right
825 into my eyes! It was almost as if He were speaking to me. I know it sounds ridiculous, but, it was like looking into... eternity itself. And it was then...

(pause; working through it)

He became a part of me. Suddenly, all the other things became very small—
all the pressures, the problems, all the burdens of living became, well,
830 livable. Because of Him.

(almost whispering)

Because of Him.

Lights down slowly on drama set.

835 **Scene Nine****Lights up on Leader.**

The Leader, moved by the scene that has just been played out before him, begins slowly, speaking to the audience not with memorized lines, but from the deepest feelings of his heart.

840

Leader

(to the audience)

The longing of the human heart is for it to be filled. Man is born with the knowledge that there is something beyond himself, and he lives with the desire to fill up his emptiness with it. But the vacancy can't be filled with just
845 anything.

(pause)

850

From the beginning God built into man a "God-space"—a place in his heart perfectly shaped to hold the Spirit of his Maker. Here God would come in and make Himself at home, to commune and fellowship with His creation, to listen and whisper words of wisdom. Man's God-space identified his ownership; no other god would fit there. So man entertained no other spirit as a replacement.

855

But one day, in a moment of rebellion, man's God-space went empty. That place in his heart fashioned and shaped to fit the Spirit of God remained, but now there would be no tenant. Man did, however, gain some new wisdom in the bargain: he now knew he was alone.

From that moment in the Garden, all the children—children from the world's second generation until world's end—would enter the world alone, separated from the God who had given them breath.

860

(pause)

After many centuries of men and women being left on their own to struggle back up to fellowship with their Maker, after many centuries of empty discipline and vain imaginings meant to replace the sweet communion they

had once enjoyed, God looked down upon His people and expressed hope
865 in the form of a tiny child.

He sent down to them, not a new creation, but a very ancient part of Himself
in the shape of man. He who dwells outside of time and space, He who holds
eternity in His hand came down to dwell, for a while, among those who
carried around inside them an empty space into which His Spirit would fit.

870 And once again man could know fellowship with his Maker. He could walk
with Him, listen to His quiet counsel, commune with Him. Once again man's
God-space could be filled with its intended occupant.

*It is recommended that at this point the Leader exit and the resident Pastor take over,
875 segueing from the speech above into a personal Invitation for those in attendance to
know Christ—to have the Savior come in and fill their empty God-space.*

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