

THE GIFT IS YOU

by Linda Allen



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THE GIFT IS YOU

An Advent Candle-lighting Collection on Reaching Out

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SYNOPSIS: Ah—Christmas gift giving, with its white elephant gifts, expensive charged items, and Black Friday frenzies. Things selected, purchased, wrapped and given. Yet the greatest gift was Jesus, who came to offer us the godly way of hope, peace, joy and love. We can give these same gifts to those around us in an ever-widening circle. *Included are:* **1. Hope** – *Alan needs what feeds the soul, not just the stomach.* **2. Peace** – *A petty misunderstanding over Christmas decorations morphs into an opportunity to see another's point of view.* **3. Joy** – *Godly joy triumphs, no matter what life throws at you.* **4. Love** – *Building God's kingdom, one kind deed and loved enemy at a time.* For use with the lighting of the Advent wreath candles.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4-10 females, 3-10 males, 0-5 either)

First Sunday of Advent: The Gift of Hope

MESSENGER (m/f) (17 lines)
 KAY (f) (11 lines)
 NEIL (m) (14 lines)
 CLAYTON (m) (6 lines)
 PAT (f)..... (9 lines)
 ALAN (m) (21 lines)

Second Sunday of Advent: The Gift of Peace

LOU ANNE (f) (7 lines)
 HANK (m)..... (8 lines)
 PAT (f)..... (10 lines)
 BETH (f)..... (11 lines)
 ED (m) (13 lines)
 CAMMY (f)..... (9 lines)
 MESSENGER (m/f) (13 lines)

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Third Sunday of Advent: The Gift of Joy

NEIL (m)	(16 lines)
PAT (f).....	(12 lines)
KAY (f)	(14 lines)
ALAN (m)	(10 lines)
MESSENGER (m/f)	(31 lines)

Fourth Sunday of Advent: The Gift of Love

MESSENGER 1 (m/f)	(37 lines)
MESSENGER 2 (m/f)	(33 lines)
MEG (f)	(5 lines)
PAT (f).....	(3 lines)
PAUL (m).....	(6 lines)
ALAN (m)	(7 lines)
NEIL (m)	(6 lines)

DURATION: 4 scenes, 6-8 minutes each

PRODUCTION NOTES

This series of short sketches complements the lighting of the Advent wreath candles on each of the four Sundays of Advent, but they may also be performed without the candle-lighting if you prefer. The traditional themes of hope, peace, joy, and love are played out in these conversations between friends. Additionally, the theme of gifts is interwoven. This is not in the sense of wrapped packages, but in our very identity in Christ. What do we have to offer a world in need? Opportunities to help are numerous. Usually we don't even have to look very hard to find them in our homes, schools, churches, workplaces, and communities. What if this Christmas, we offered the gift of our time to love, serve, and help others? After all, Jesus was God's gift to a world sorely in need of a Messiah.

Each week requires from 5-7 actors. You may use many of the same actors or switch it up. Either way will work. There are some bigger dramatic moments, but much of the script plays out like it does in real life: discussions, hurt feelings, humor (thank you, God, for humor!), apologies, sweet forgiveness... in other words, the whole range of human experiences and emotions. Many of these feelings are heightened further by the expectations that surround the

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Advent and Christmas season. We can wear ourselves to a frazzle just trying to fulfill someone's (usually our own) to-do list. Perhaps our Christmases can be kinder and gentler by taking the time to listen to a friend who needs to be heard or to encourage a child.

We kept costuming very basic. The Messengers wore white, and all other cast members wore black. Feel free to use this simple approach, or add your own touch. You won't need to go on a treasure hunt looking for props, as this script does not require any (other than the Advent wreath that your church likely already owns).

As we celebrate Jesus' presence, may you be the present that your little corner of the world needs this Advent season.

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The Gift of Hope

First Sunday of Advent

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Psalm 34:4 (NIV), Romans 5:5 (BSB)

CAST OF CHARACTER

(2 females, 3 males, 1 either)

MESSENGER (m/f) (17 lines)

KAY (f) (11 lines)

NEIL (m) (14 lines)

CLAYTON (m) (6 lines)

PAT (f)..... (9 lines)

ALAN (m) (21 lines)



AT START: *The Advent wreath should be in place with a long-barreled lighter beside it. None of the candles are lit. KAY, NEIL, CLAYTON, and PAT are at Stage Right. MESSENGER is at Center Stage. ALAN sits on a stool at Stage Left.*

MESSENGER: *(To CAST at Stage Right, in an expansive voice.)*

Listen up! I have a message from God.

KAY: Ooooh! This sounds exciting!

NEIL: Why?

KAY: Because it's a message from God. Isn't that a good thing?

NEIL: In my case, not usually.

CLAYTON: *(To NEIL.)* Well, maybe he's here to announce you've won the lottery.

MESSENGER: Not a *chance*. Pun intended. *(Laugh at your own little joke, then a beat to get serious.)* I've come instead to bring an Advent message.

NEIL: If it's what we say instead of Merry Christmas, I gave up saying "Happy holidays" for Lent.

MESSENGER: *(Patiently dealing with these earthlings.)* It's more important than that. It's about God's gift.

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- 1 **KAY:** God's gift? I know! Jesus!
- 2 **MESSENGER:** Well, that's usually the right answer. But this time,
3 (*Beat.*) the gift is *you*.
- 4 **CLAYTON:** Excuse me?
- 5 **NEIL:** I've been called a lot of things before, but never a gift.
- 6 **PAT:** And, believe you me, *that's* the truth!
- 7 **MESSENGER:** God gave his one and only Son to a hurting,
8 damaged, dysfunctional world. Christ—the greatest gift God
9 could give. But the next greatest gift is each of you.
- 10 **NEIL:** I don't feel like much of a gift.
- 11 **MESSENGER:** We're not going on feelings here. We're going on
12 marching orders, and I'm the courier. (*Indicates ALAN.*) Do you
13 see that guy over there? (*ALL look at ALAN.*) He's in a bad way.
14 Financial woes. Family issues. Job problems. Health concerns.
15 A complete sense of hopelessness.
- 16 **PAT:** (*Overly sweet and concerned.*) Oh, we all know him. Does
17 he need a lift to church? A casserole? A gift card?
- 18 **MESSENGER:** All that's good. Do it, of course. But he also needs
19 a message of hope.
- 20 **NEIL:** Isn't that God and the preacher's job?
- 21 **MESSENGER:** For reasons beyond our understanding, God
22 chooses to work through you. (*Sighs.*) Not my personal choice,
23 but I guess God knows what he's doing. Now, go!
- 24 **NEIL:** (*Big sigh.*) I'll go first and get it over with. (*To ALAN.*) Hi there,
25 fella.
- 26 **ALAN:** Hello.
- 27 **NEIL:** Heard you were having some bad times.
- 28 **ALAN:** I guess word gets around.
- 29 **NEIL:** That health issue you got? I have a second cousin who had
30 the same thing.
- 31 **ALAN:** Really?
- 32 **NEIL:** He hurt like the devil the whole time. His situation dragged
33 on for six months. Maybe more.
- 34 **ALAN:** Oh, man. The same thing?
- 35 **NEIL:** And the insurance didn't pay much on the doctor bills, either.
36 Loopholes. You know insurance.
- 37 **ALAN:** Moot point. I lost my insurance when I got laid off.

- 1 **NEIL:** Bummer. I'd say you're up the creek without a paddle. Well,
2 just stopped by for a minute to cheer you up. Gotta go. (*Crosses*
3 *back to others at Stage Right.*)
- 4 **ALAN:** Thanks for coming by. (*Beat.*) I guess.
- 5 **NEIL:** (*To MESSENGER.*) How'd I do?
- 6 **MESSENGER:** (*To NEIL.*) On the gift exchange of life, you just
7 came in ninety-nine cents short of a dollar.
- 8 **NEIL:** Not a total failure, then.
- 9 **MESSENGER:** Not quite a total. Um . . . I'm sending someone else
10 in.
- 11 **KAY:** Let me go! Let me!
- 12 **MESSENGER:** I have a bad feeling about this. (*To KAY.*) Go get
13 'em, tiger!
- 14 **KAY:** (*Crosses to ALAN.*) Good mor-ning! (*Every line, every word*
15 *is musical and chirpy.*)
- 16 **ALAN:** Good morning.
- 17 **KAY:** I hear Mr. Bluebird isn't sitting on your window sill right now!
- 18 **ALAN:** (*Who is this person?*) Excuse me?
- 19 **KAY:** Are you having a touch of the melancholies?
- 20 **ALAN:** If you mean is my life spiraling downward, out of control,
21 into a pit—
- 22 **KAY:** Oooooohhhh. I know *just* how you feel.
- 23 **ALAN:** (*Skeptically*) Really.
- 24 **KAY:** When I have a bout with a heaviness of heart, I look on the
25 bright side!
- 26 **ALAN:** But—
- 27 **KAY:** (*Cluelessly spouting clichés.*) Look for the silver lining! It's
28 always darkest before dawn. There's a light at the end of the
29 tunnel. Where there's life, there's hope! Jesus is the answer!
- 30 **ALAN:** I'm still trying to figure out the question.
- 31 **MESSENGER:** (*Disgusted.*) OK! Enough. I have to do an
32 intervention here. (*To KAY.*) Out!
- 33 **KAY:** (*Rejoining the others.*) Excuse me? I thought I was the gift.
- 34 **MESSENGER:** Ah, yes—the gift that just keeps on giving. We need
35 to work on that. I'll get back with you. (*Turns to PAT.*) Can you
36 please take a message of hope to your brother in pain?
- 37 **PAT:** I'd rather take a stew. (*MESSENGER stares her down.*) OK,
38 the stew *and* a message then. (*Crosses to ALAN.*) Hi.

- 1 **ALAN:** Hi.
- 2 **PAT:** Not feeling so great?
- 3 **ALAN:** Nope.
- 4 **PAT:** Anything I can do?
- 5 **ALAN:** I can't think of anything.
- 6 **PAT:** Um, I brought you a stew and some rolls.
- 7 **ALAN:** Thank you.
- 8 **PAT:** And, uh, if you need anything . . .
- 9 **ALAN:** I could use some hope right now. I feel so—
- 10 **PAT:** Well, then, just call me. I have a great chicken and rice recipe!
- 11 *(Moves away from ALAN. To MESSENGER.)* How did I do?
- 12 **MESSENGER:** Stew is a good thing. People need sustenance. But
- 13 they also need a deep understanding of what's at the very core
- 14 of their lives. What feeds the soul, not just the stomach.
- 15 **PAT:** Am I supposed to know that?
- 16 **MESSENGER:** It's not found in a cookbook. Or a bank book. Or
- 17 the medicine cabinet. Or anything with a key attached to it. *(To*
- 18 **CLAYTON.)** Do you have a message of hope for this man?
- 19 **CLAYTON:** I believe I do. *(Walks over to ALAN.)* I came by today
- 20 to see how you're doing. And I've been thinking of how dark our
- 21 lives can be at times.
- 22 **ALAN:** You know that, too.
- 23 **CLAYTON:** I don't know your exact problems, of course. I do
- 24 remember, though, an especially dark time for me. Things were
- 25 way out of control in my life. I was driving home one night—to
- 26 an empty house. Traffic was thick. Rain was pouring so hard I
- 27 could barely make out anything beyond the other car lights. My
- 28 despair was so great that I literally felt a crushing pain.
- 29 **ALAN:** I'm feeling that way right now.
- 30 **CLAYTON:** *(Slowly.)* And then I realized as I looked at all those car
- 31 lights, I wasn't the only one in the rain. There were countless
- 32 others. And it came to me that we were all out there in the rain
- 33 together, yet enfolded in God's great loving Spirit. God's Spirit is
- 34 greater than pain or despair or grief. Greater than we are, and
- 35 all we hold inside us.
- 36 **MESSENGER:** Remind him what the psalmist wrote.
- 37 **CLAYTON:** David said, "I sought the Lord, and he answered me;
- 38 he delivered me from all my fears."

1 **ALAN:** Deliverance not from all my problems. *(Beat.)* But
2 deliverance from all my fears. *(Beat.)* Hope beyond my
3 understanding.

4 **MESSENGER:** The apostle Paul said, “And hope does not
5 disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our
6 hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

7 **ALAN:** *(Nods thoughtfully.)* Hope.

8

9 *ALAN lights the first Advent candle, the candle of hope.*

THE END

The Gift of Peace

Second Sunday of Advent

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Romans 14:19 (NIV); 2 Corinthians 13:11 (NKJV)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 females, 2 males, 1 either)

LOU ANNE (f)..... (7 lines)
 HANK (m)..... (8 lines)
 PAT (f)..... (10 lines)
 BETH (f)..... (11 lines)
 ED (m)..... (13 lines)
 CAMMY (f)..... (9 lines)
 MESSENGER (m/f) (13 lines)



AT START: Stage directions depend on microphones and space available. Enter and Exit simply mean to step forward toward or away from a microphone, if applicable. It might work for your situation to have people who are “on” face the congregation, and those who are “off” face away. The MESSENGER needs to stand apart from the rest of the cast.

LOU ANNE and HANK enter.

LOU ANNE: And so I told the preacher if *that woman* is going to be in charge of the decorating for the Christmas buffet, I just might consider becoming a _____! (*Insert another denomination.*)

HANK: That’s pretty drastic, don’t you think?

LOU ANNE: I’ve been decorating that hall since before Cammy Collins was—

HANK: Before she was born?

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1 **LOU ANNE:** Before you and I were married. I'm just beside myself!
2 What ingratitude down at that church! The time I've dedicated to
3 the Lord every year, working my fingers to the bone. The sheer
4 drudgery of it all. And some of those decorations I bought with
5 my own money!

6 **HANK:** *Our* money.

7 **LOU ANNE:** And what does Cammy Collins know about
8 decorating? Helen Beasley said that Cammy Collins told her she
9 wants "simple and tasteful" this year. And get this, Hank—she
10 said, "For a change." Oh, the very idea! (*Exits in a huff.*)

11

12 *PAT enters.*

13

14 **PAT:** I just stopped by to say hello. Where's Lou Anne?

15 **HANK:** Oh, she's in a state right now. She stomped out to the patio.
16 Seems the women's group put Cammy Collins in charge of
17 Christmas decorations in the church hall this year.

18 **PAT:** Well, that's just not right! Lou Anne has had that job for years.

19 **HANK:** And apparently Cammy wants everything in silver and
20 white. Oh, and Lou Anne said someone told her Cammy said it
21 was going to be simple and tasteful this year. Or something.
22 Anyway, this could be the straw that broke the camel's back for
23 Lou Anne, if you know what I mean. (*Exits.*)

24 **PAT:** Oh, my. Another crisis. We've *never* done silver and white.
25 Simple and tasteful? Wait till Beth hears about this!

26

27 *HANK exits. BETH enters.*

28

29 **BETH:** I came over just as soon as you called. What's up?

30 **PAT:** You'll never guess what's happened down at the church.

31 **BETH:** Oh, tell me! Tell me!

32 **PAT:** The women's group put Cammy Collins in charge of
33 decorating the hall for the Christmas buffet.

34 **BETH:** Oh, no! I can't believe it! And Lou Anne *always* does such
35 a beautiful job. Everyone loves the way it's *always* looked. All
36 the multicolored lights. The flowers. The decorations hanging
37 from the ceiling. Why, you can barely get through the hall without
38 bumping into something glittering and twinkly.

1 **PAT:** I know, I know. Cammy wants all silver and white. And simple.

2 And tasteful! She actually used the word “tasteful.”

3 **BETH:** Well! Someone needs to put a stop to this.

4 **PAT:** It's out of my hands. I'm not on the property committee. But

5 Ed Partridge is, and he's the one who needs to do something.

6 We don't want Lou Anne and Hank upset. They might leave the

7 church! And Hank is the best liturgist (*Or substitute another*

8 *position at your church.*) we have! But *I'm* not talking to Ed. I'm

9 still not over what he said to me about the way I parked my car

10 at the church picnic in 2002. Why, he thinks he owns the place!

11
12 *PAT exits.*

13
14 **BETH:** I'll handle this. I'll call Ed myself. (*Uses a hand gesture to*

15 *indicate a phone.*)

16
17 *ED enters and answers the “phone” using a hand gesture.*

18
19 **ED:** Yeah?

20 **BETH:** Ed, this is Beth from church.

21 **ED:** What do you want this time?

22 **BETH:** I just want to bring something to your attention. Poor Lou

23 Anne Sims has her feeling hurt because Cammy Collins is doing

24 the decorating for the Christmas buffet instead of her. And Lou

25 Anne has *always* done the decorations. And Cammy Collins is

26 going to change everything. And we can't have that!

27 **ED:** I don't have anything to do with Christmas decorations. The

28 women's ministry takes care of that.

29 **BETH:** But don't we have rules?

30 **ED:** Somewhere. (*Beat.*) If it was up to me, we wouldn't have *any*

31 decorations. Do you think Mary draped tinsel all over the stable

32 for baby Jesus? I think we should cut the fluff and just

33 concentrate on church stuff.

34 **BETH:** This *is* church stuff, and *you're* in charge of the building and

35 property. *You* need to step in here! Why, there's no telling what

36 Lou Anne might do. She might just up and leave and take Hank

37 with her. And he's the best liturgist (*Or other job mentioned*

38 *previously*) we've got!

1

2 *BETH exits. CAMMY enters.*

3

4 **ED:** Now I have to call Cammy Collins. (*"Phone" to ear.*) This is Ed
5 from the building and property committee.6 **CAMMY:** (*On the phone.*) Yeah, I thought so. The birds had
7 stopped singing over here.8 **ED:** Well, apparently you've caused some drama down at the
9 church.10 **CAMMY:** Me?11 **ED:** People are calling me and saying that you took over the
12 Christmas buffet decorating.13 **CAMMY:** People are calling you?! I didn't take over anything. The
14 women's group selected me. They called me up and practically
15 begged me to do the job this year. Did you get that, Ed?
16 Practically *begged* me to do the job. They are sick and tired of
17 the hall looking like a carnival sideshow. All we needed was a
18 two-headed cat dressed in spandex and sequins!19 **ED:** Well, people are telling me that you want to change everything.20 **CAMMY:** And that's bad?21 **ED:** It's different. And we don't much hold with *different* down at the
22 church.23 **CAMMY:** And I guess how the church hall is decorated is set in
24 stone along with the Ten Commandments?25 **ED:** You don't need to get snippy with me. I don't want to get Hank
26 ticked off because you and Lou Anne are fussing over the
27 decorating. Hank and Lou Anne might leave the church.28 **CAMMY:** (*"Z formation" with head and very expansive gestures.*)
29 Well, I say if there's a front door at the church, then there's a
30 back door, and if they want to go out it, I'll open the door wider!31 **MESSENGER:** (*Big voice.*) OK. That's it!

32

33 *ALL enter and look at MESSENGER.*

34

35 **MESSENGER:** Can you hear yourselves? Did you just hear the
36 words you were saying to each other? We of the heavenly host
37 certainly heard them.38 **HANK:** Word for word?

- 1 **MESSENGER:** What do you think?
- 2 **ED:** Doesn't God forget all of our shortcomings?
- 3 **MESSENGER:** God does. But you get to remember them!
- 4 **PAT:** Oh dear.
- 5 **MESSENGER:** Oh dear indeed. I have a question for you. Who do
6 you worship? The God of discord? The God of hurt feelings? Of
7 self-serving? Of arrogance? Of meanness? Do you even
8 remember why you're in a church in the first place? Why you
9 even gather together at the annual Christmas buffet for food and
10 fellowship? Do you?
- 11 **CAMMY:** (*Somewhat contrite.*) Christ.
- 12 **MESSENGER:** At least you remember something from Sunday
13 school.
- 14 **LOU ANNE:** But sometimes I—
- 15 **MESSENGER:** Please! Can you stop saying "I" for one breath?
- 16 **BETH:** But we *do* get our feelings hurt sometimes. And we *do*
17 have—
- 18 **MESSENGER:** You do have other people around you. People God
19 loves and cherishes as much as he does you. And you're called
20 to live with these other people in peace.
- 21 **CAMMY:** But that's hard.
- 22 **MESSENGER:** Of course, it is. Why do you think Jesus sent the
23 Holy Spirit? You worship a God of love, peace, mercy, and
24 justice. Jesus embodied every bit of that. No arrogance. No self-
25 serving. No (*Mimic a crybaby.*) "Oh, somebody hurt my feelings."
26 (*Back to MESSENGER voice.*) And when you invite the Lord into
27 your lives, he intends to *be* the Lord of your lives.
- 28 **HANK:** But how?
- 29 **MESSENGER:** Well, first you have to *know* the Lord—really know
30 him deep in your souls. And you have to know what he was like.
31 And then pray to be more like him in your own unique way. God
32 will honor your intention and that prayer through the mystery of
33 the Holy Spirit.
- 34 **PAT:** So it starts inside us. Not with the others around us?
- 35 **MESSENGER:** They have their own God relationship to work on.
36 And trust me, something wonderful will happen to you and those
37 around you—the peace within you will spill over and out. The

1 apostle Paul wrote, “Let us therefore make every effort to do
2 what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”

3 **ED:** *Do peace. So peace can be an action word. (A statement—*
4 *not a question.)*

5 **CAMMY:** *(After a beat, to LOU ANNE.)* Look—Lou Anne, I had no
6 idea the women’s committee was going to ask me to do the
7 decorating. But I’m a little worried. I may be way out of my
8 element here. Could we work on it together?

9 **LOU ANNE:** *(To CAMMY.)* You know, Cammy, I’ve done it by
10 myself so many years that I’d appreciate working with someone
11 else, and I’m sure you have some fresh ideas.

12 **ED:** *(To PAT.)* Maybe I could be more cheerful and friendly
13 sometimes.

14 **PAT:** Maybe you could. And I suppose we could be nicer to you.
15 I’m sorry I got mad about the parking space. *(To BETH.)* And
16 sorry I got you worked up over Lou Anne and Cammy and the
17 decorations.

18 **BETH:** *(To the MESSENGER.)* So, I get to remember *forever* that
19 sometimes I’m a busybody?

20 **MESSENGER:** *(To BETH.)* Ah . . . but you also get *forever* to work
21 on peace!

22 **HANK:** *(To LOU ANNE.)* So I guess we’re not leaving the church
23 then?

24 **LOU ANNE:** *(To HANK.)* I know the _____ *(Insert previous*
25 *denomination but make it plural.)* are nice people, but I’m happy
26 here. *(Big sigh.)* Truth be known, surely God’s peace can be
27 found everywhere.

28 **MESSENGER:** To quote Paul again, “Become complete. Be of
29 good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love
30 and peace will be with you.”

31
32 **MESSENGER** *lights the first Advent candle, and then the second,*
33 *the candle of peace.*

THE END

The Gift of Joy

Third Sunday of Advent

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: John 16:22 (NIV)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 2 males, 1 either)

NEIL (m) (16 lines)

PAT (f)..... (12 lines)

KAY (f) (14 lines)

ALAN (m) (10 lines)

MESSENGER (m/f) (31 lines)



1 **AT START:** NEIL, PAT, KAY, and ALAN take places Stage Right;
2 MESSENGER is at Stage Left, apart from the others.

3

4 **NEIL:** (*Grumpy.*) I'm not crazy about the preacher's sermon series.

5 **PAT:** Why not?

6 **NEIL:** He keeps talking Sunday after Sunday about gifts.

7 **PAT:** Well, It's the Advent season, so it's natural to think about
8 giving. And he's not talking about the stewardship campaign.

9 **NEIL:** Yeah. That's a little something to be thankful for. During *that*
10 sermon series, I had to keep my hand tight around my wallet.

11 **PAT:** He's talking about how we can be gifts.

12 **NEIL:** Isn't that something. Down at the church, they want it *all*.

13 They want our money. They want our blood during the blood
14 drive. And now the preacher wants us. (*Beat.*) Imagine me, a
15 gift.

16 **PAT:** Yeah. Hard to imagine.

17 **KAY:** (*A little too perky and naïve.*) But I just love the sermon series
18 on giving ourselves as gifts! And this Sunday is joy. I truly think
19 I'm a gift of joy to others around me.

20 **NEIL:** Think again, sister.

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- 1 **KAY:** What?
- 2 **NEIL:** A gift of joy. Ha, ha.
- 3 **KAY:** But I *am* happy! And I just love Advent. I love the lights and
4 the colors. I love buying presents and wrapping them. I enjoy the
5 decorating and the baking.
- 6 **NEIL:** So, how's about a gift to me? Did you bring cookies?
- 7 **PAT:** Shush. It's nice if people want to have a good time during the
8 happiest season of the year. Leave her alone. I wish *you* felt that
9 way. (*Beat.*) Actually, I wish *I* felt that way.
- 10 **KAY:** Don't you like the Christmas season?
- 11 **PAT:** I used to before I was old enough to read the papers. It's just
12 page after page of bad news. And at church, people share their
13 prayer requests about the traumatic things happening to them
14 and their loved ones, and my heart just breaks. The TV is full of
15 horrible things going on around the world. (*Sighs.*) And my own
16 family has issues. There's not much to celebrate, it seems.
- 17 **ALAN:** Yeah, I'm thinking about all the glitter at the mall. All those
18 slick, glitzy ads in the paper. You know, for technology that will
19 be obsolete by Memorial Day. The junk they advertise on TV that
20 ends up in a yard sale in a year or two. Depressing hoopla.
- 21 **KAY:** Well, you certainly aren't a gift of joy to anyone. At least I try!
- 22 **ALAN:** Sometimes I think people like you, who live in fairyland,
23 make things worse for the rest of us in the real world!
- 24 **KAY:** What a terrible thing to say!
- 25 **MESSENGER:** (*Big voice.*) *Amen* to that.
- 26 **NEIL:** Who are you?
- 27 **MESSENGER:** Your worst nightmare.
- 28 **PAT:** Oh, dear.
- 29 **MESSENGER:** Oh dear, indeed.
- 30 **KAY:** Should we be afraid?
- 31 **MESSENGER:** Usually we members of the heavenly host
32 announce ourselves with, "Fear not!" But in this case—
- 33 **ALAN:** In our case?
- 34 **MESSENGER:** In your case, I think quaking in your boots is called
35 for. So, go ahead and fear a little.
- 36 **KAY:** What are you going to do to us?
- 37 **MESSENGER:** I'd like to turn you inside out, but I don't have that
38 kind of power.

- 1 **NEIL:** So you're gonna shake us up a little?
- 2 **MESSENGER:** At the very least.
- 3 **PAT:** That doesn't sound pleasant.
- 4 **MESSENGER:** Not every message from God is pleasant. If you
5 want pleasant, buy a *Reader's Digest*.
- 6 **ALAN:** We're just calling it like it is.
- 7 **MESSENGER:** No, you're not. You haven't even scratched the
8 surface of *what is*. (*Powerful idea. The MESSENGER is*
9 *speaking of a different kind of reality.*)
- 10 **KAY:** But at least *I'm* getting it right. I'm festive and happy! I'm not
11 all gloom and doom.
- 12 **MESSENGER:** Yeah, well, enjoy that festive, happy feeling while it
13 lasts.
- 14 **KAY:** What's that supposed to mean?
- 15 **MESSENGER:** It's good to feel full and happy. Your family is fine
16 right now. The bills are paid. Your gas tank is full. You have
17 cookie dough in the refrigerator and presents under a decorated
18 tree.
- 19 **KAY:** Isn't that good?
- 20 **MESSENGER:** Of course. So enjoy every twinkle. Every smile.
21 Every warm hug. Just know it's temporary.
- 22 **KAY:** That's a terrible thing to say.
- 23 **MESSENGER:** You need to savor every minute of the good.
24 *Because it is temporary.* And deep down, you know that.
- 25 **KAY:** And hard times are ahead.
- 26 **MESSENGER:** Of course. Everything you touch is temporary.
27 Every relationship you have will end.
- 28 **KAY:** All temporary.
- 29 **MESSENGER:** But those hard times are temporary, too. Another
30 reason to rejoice!
- 31 **PAT:** But what about me? How can I deal with feeling so much
32 pain? I don't mean my own. I mean that I hurt so much for the
33 suffering around me.
- 34 **MESSENGER:** Ah. You truly have a big heart that hurts for others.
35 What a wonderful thing that is. You have a heart like God's own
36 that beats out love for this broken world. Good for you.
- 37 **PAT:** But how can I—
- 38 **MESSENGER:** How can you fix a broken world?

- 1 **PAT:** Yes. I'm not much against all the—
- 2 **MESSENGER:** Oh, but you *are* much! You're on God's own side.
- 3 You're on the winning team! And believe me, you'll find lots of
- 4 ways to do your part. Love and joy will pulsate out from you in
- 5 great outpourings. Rejoice!
- 6 **ALAN:** All that's well and good for them, but I'm just so empty. I
- 7 can't even put it into words beyond . . . empty.
- 8 **MESSENGER:** Congratulations! Blessed are you!
- 9 **ALAN:** Congratulations? I don't think you understood what I said.
- 10 **MESSENGER:** Oh, I understood perfectly. You're in a wonderful
- 11 position. We of the heavenly host are celebrating you. You are
- 12 finally emptied and in the place where God can do something
- 13 with you. You're ready to be filled.
- 14 **ALAN:** Filled?
- 15 **MESSENGER:** Well, you used the word *empty*. So I went with that.
- 16 If you'd said you were a lump of clay, then I would've said you're
- 17 ready to be molded. If you said you were a chunk of wood,
- 18 then—
- 19 **ALAN:** Then I'd be ready to be carved?
- 20 **MESSENGER:** Into the something extraordinary God intended all
- 21 along.
- 22 **ALAN:** Something extraordinary in me?
- 23 **MESSENGER:** We all knew you were very special the day you
- 24 were born. I hope you feel as blessed as you are. You have a
- 25 truly beautiful soul.
- 26 **ALAN:** Wow.
- 27 **NEIL:** (*A change of heart.*) Do I have a beautiful soul?
- 28 **MESSENGER:** Certainly!
- 29 **PAT:** Really?
- 30 **MESSENGER:** Of course. You know the old saying, "God don't
- 31 make no junk." You, my good man, are perfect in your core.
- 32 **NEIL:** In my core?
- 33 **MESSENGER:** Well, you don't exactly wear your perfection on your
- 34 sleeve.
- 35 **NEIL:** How can I find what's in my core?
- 36 **MESSENGER:** Ah. You could start with the Bible.
- 37 **NEIL:** I'm not much of a Bible thumper.

- 1 **MESSENGER:** Oh, don't thump it. Read it. Take a verse and
2 memorize it and chew on it all day long.
3 **NEIL:** It will have to be a short one.
4 **MESSENGER:** How about what Jesus said to his disciples: "No
5 one will take away your joy."
6 **NEIL:** That's pretty easy.
7 **MESSENGER:** So say it. Believe it. Think about it. Live it!
8 **NEIL:** (*With a sense of wonder.*) "No one will take away your joy."
9 *My joy.*
10 **MESSENGER:** God's joy through Jesus Christ fills you up and
11 empowers you to live your lives in joy *regardless* of what the
12 world throws at you. Joy that literally cascades over to others.
13 People you know. Strangers you encounter. Ah, my good
14 people, let God's own joy fill you to overflowing. Joy.
15
16 *MESSENGER lights the first two Advent candles, and then the third,*
17 *the candle of joy.*

THE END



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