

Moving with Jesus: A White Gift Drama

By Bill Steadman

A White Gift drama that examines the realities of the Christmas story in light of our acquisitive nature today.

Permission is granted to congregations and other groups to produce this play. Please credit the author, and the United Church website as your source.

Characters

Ethel and Thomas
Mary and Joseph

Props

Moving boxes
Large toolbox (lid could be closed, without much in it, with a few old tools sticking out)
Two large makeup bags or kits
Small cloth satchel
Manger

Costumes

Jeans and sweatshirts, flannel shirts, T-shirts for Ethel and Thomas
Cloaks and headcloths for Mary and Joseph
Pillow for Mary's "pregnancy"

Staging

Action could be staged on two sides, with attention focused first on one scene, then on the other. Actors in the inactive scene would freeze in place.

Scene One

(Couple in the last frantic efforts of packing up their home for a major move across the province, or even across the country. Boxes are piled everywhere—half packed, items in disarray, a box or two overflowing, framed pictures askew, garbage bags in the corner. The scene gives a sense of clutter and mess and the overwhelming task that is still ahead to finish the job.)

Ethel

(with a sense of intensity in her voice) Hurry up, Thomas, we can't take a break right now—in less than 48 hours the movers are arriving and we need to have everything in boxes and ready to load.

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Thomas

And whose idea was it to have the movers come on a Tuesday morning? Let me remind you—it wasn't my idea. I thought we should load on a Monday so we'd have the packing done on a weekend and be on the road a day earlier to our new home.

Ethel

(exasperated) Are you suggesting we'd be better off having the movers come tomorrow, on Monday? Besides, I wanted to start packing a month ago, and you said it would only take two weeks to get everything ready, and here it is.... *(calms down and decides to take a deep breath and speak more slowly)* Look, Thomas *(speaks very deliberately, looking him in the eye)*, arguing about how we got here is no good. The simple truth is we have too much stuff to get packed up in the next day and a bit, so let's decide what we don't need and give it away.

Thomas

Give it away? We've spent 34 years accumulating all of this and now you want to simply "give it all away"? *(fire in his eyes as he emphasizes last phrase)*

Ethel

I didn't say, "Give it ALL away." But let's be reasonable, there's a lot we don't need.

Look, you have that old box filled with tools you've never used the eight years we've been in this house. I bet they could go to auction or the next church rummage sale. *(She picks up one or two tools to examine and reflect on.)*

Thomas

Yeah, right, get rid of my valuable tools. *(frustration clear in his voice)* Of course I haven't used them; *they're not supposed to be used. (looking very irritated)* They're old and valuable. Put them back. *(looking around)* Why do you need two boxes of makeup supplies—why don't you get rid of them? *(smugly and with nose in the air)*

Ethel

Maybe I will, but I don't have time to sort them right now. *(picks up a box of makeup and moves it into a pile ready to be loaded)* I'll do that after the move.

Thomas

Sure, tell me what to get rid of and keep your own stuff.

Ethel

(looking sad and changing the pace of the conversation, breathes a big sigh) This is exhausting, Thomas. I feel like your box of tools—old and useless.

Thomas

Now don't forget, they're also valuable.

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Ethel

(in disgust) Are you suggesting that I'm not?

Scene Two

(Cut to other scene, where Joseph and Mary are getting ready for the journey to register in Bethlehem. They are packing up their meagre supplies.)

Joseph

(in a rushed panic) Hurry, Mary, we must get going. The way is longer than you think, and I want to make sure we find a room tonight.

Mary

Please, Joseph, don't rush me. I can't be pushed around. I need time. Besides, we are packing for more than the two of us. *(pats tummy for emphasis)*

Joseph

You'll be fine, Mary. The baby's not due for a couple of weeks. You don't need anything special. Maybe an extra blanket and a soft cloth. What do babies need anyway? Milk and a clean bottom—that's it.

Mary

Their needs must be met, Joseph. Look around us—we have just the basics. *(Small cloth satchel with few clothing items could be on the floor.)* We have just enough for ourselves to get by. How will we care for this child?

Joseph

Children are a gift from God—surely God will provide. And our friends have helped us out with clothing and other items.

Mary

Don't be so flippant. I'm being serious. Of course our child is a gift from God and others are supporting us, but we must care for him, love him, meet his needs. What do we have? *(looks around at few clothes and no furnishings)*

Joseph

We have a lot—we have our love for each other.

Mary

And we have our love for God. Okay, I agree, we have a lot of love, but I'm worried about how I will—I mean *we* will—look after this precious little boy.

Joseph

Don't worry. *(attention focused on getting on the move)* Let's get going.

(They pack up what they have and head out.)

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Scene Three

(Back to original scene, where packing efforts are more frantic because the movers are expected any minute. A bit more is packed, but some items still wait to be put into boxes before loading.)

Thomas

(looking around, a smug smile of satisfaction on his face as a few empty boxes remain to be filled with items on the floor) I told you we would make it—hardly anything left to pack and the movers are not even here. Great job, if I say so myself.

Ethel

(looking around shaking her head) You would think it was great, Thomas, because you left all of the details to me. We still have three or four boxes to fill, and that will take time. I know how long it takes to organize even a small pile like this. And the movers just called—they're on their way! Have you cleaned out your workshop bench? *(Thomas has a puzzled look on his face and shakes his head "no.")* Did you move the lawn furniture we don't need to our daughter's place as you said you would?

Thomas

(reluctantly) No, I forgot.

Ethel

We have too much, Thomas, plain and simple. We talked about downsizing and neither one of us got rid of anything significant. Our possessions are not our possessions—they own us, control us, make us do things we do not like, have even come between us. All we do these days is argue. About what? About our possessions. What a waste of time. All of this anger is destroying a very special relationship. It shouldn't be like this, Thomas.

Thomas

I'm sorry if you feel our possessions are so important. I do not....

Ethel

(cutting in before the second sentence starts) Well, I do not think they are so important, but we have made them seem the most important things we have. They are NOT! *(emphatically)*

Thomas

So what should we do?

Ethel

I think we should try to finish our packing and pledge to each other that we will not simply put everything away at our new condo. That we will get rid of things we

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don't need and be the owners of our possessions, not the servants of our possessions.

Thomas

Fair enough. Seems ironic that we are thinking of Christmas and the need to be generous, and we are worried about giving away things we don't even use.

Ethel

Or need. I wish I had the faith of Mary—giving birth in a stable with nothing to her name. She did not worry about possessions.

Thomas

Are you saying you want to sell our condo before we move in, and buy a barn?

Ethel

(short-tempered, curt) Don't be so smart. *(Then she realizes he was joking with her, so she relaxes and smiles, waving in a welcoming way.)* Oh! Get over here and help me pack these boxes.

Scene Four

(A manger has been added to the scene. Mary and Joseph are settling into the stable, and the birth of the baby Jesus is nearing. Joseph tries to offer comfort as Mary attempts to be comfortable in this awkward setting.)

Joseph

Well, here we are.... I'm so sorry, Mary, that this is where you'll have our child.

Mary

This is no time to second-guess, Joseph. I need your help now. We only have each other.

Joseph

Are you sure?

Mary

OK, and God is with us. You know I know that. But let's be honest. We need each other to get through this. Are you up to it?

Joseph

We don't have anything else. Remember what the angel said? God is with us. You are fulfilling God's promise. You are having this child because of who you are, not what you have.

Mary

(slight smile) You're right, Joseph. What we have will get us nowhere.

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Joseph

That's true of everyone—what we have will get us nowhere. Life is not about accumulating things. This little one is not about material success.

Mary

But he is a gift from God.

Joseph

For sure. And someday more people than you and I will know that.

Scene Five

(Back to moving scene. Boxes are packed.)

Ethel

Okay, here they are. *(looking away, expecting the movers to walk in)* I think we're ready. Sorry I lost it, Thomas. Thanks for your help.

Thomas

No, thanks for all you did. I did coast a bit around this move. You picked up the slack.

Ethel

Let's move these boxes over so the movers have a pathway to get upstairs to the bedrooms. Will you help me?

Thomas

Sure, but first I need something.

Ethel

This is no time to go for a coffee.

Thomas

What I need is a hug. *(pair hug by the boxes)*

Ethel

You can be lovable at times.

Thomas

And you keep reminding me that Christmas involves thinking about others, not thinking about what I need. I'm glad you haven't given up on me.

Ethel

I'm glad God never gives up on any one of us. That's the most important message of Christmas.

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Thomas

Too bad we can't box that.

Ethel

It shouldn't be in a box, Thomas. It should be shared with the world.

(ring of doorbell, or knock at the door)

Thomas

(yells to those at door) Come on in—door's unlocked. We're glad you're here! We're ready for you.

Ethel

(looking out wistfully to the congregation/audience) And I think we're ready for Christmas, too. *(looks around at the boxes piled up)* I've learned one thing this year—lots of stuff doesn't help us be more caring.

Hymn: "Come God, Be among Us"

Come God, be among us, shine your gentle light upon this stable.
Come God, be among us, help us share your presence as we're able.

Jesus, be among us, share your birthing cry within this manger.
Jesus, be among us, help us care for friends and also strangers.

Spirit, be among us, may we look beyond the gifts and glory.
Spirit, be among us, breathe new life into the Christmas story.

Children, be among us, you are signs of hope that guide us onward.
Children, be among us, point us to the way that leads us forward.

People, be among us, share with others times of exaltation.
People, be among us, please accept with faith your obligations.

Come God, be among us, shine your gentle light upon this stable.
Come God, be among us, help us share your presence as we're able.

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Christmas Play Song

Steadman



Come God, be a - mong us, shine your gen - tle light up - on this sta - ble.
Je - sus, be a - mong us, share your birth - ing cry with - in this man - ger,
Spir - it, be a - mong us, may we look be - yond the gifts and glo - ry;
Chil - dren, be a - mong us, you are signs of hope that guide us on - ward;
Peo - ple, be a - mong us, share with oth - ers times of ex - al - a - tion;



Come God, be a - mong us, help us share your pres - ence as we're a - ble.
Je - sus, be a - mong us, help us care for friends and al - so stran - gers.
Spir - it, be a - mong us, breathe new life int - o the Christ - mas sto - ry.
Chil - dren, be a - mong us, point us to the way that leads us for - ward.
Peo - ple, be a - mong us, please ac - cept with faith your ob - li - ga - tions.
Come God, be a - mong us, shine your gen - tle light up - on this sta - ble.