

# Why White Gifts?

## ***A White Gift Drama***

**Narrator:** The time is 1903, the place a Methodist parsonage in Ohio. Elaine, the minister's wife, and her two daughters, Sarah and Jane, have just returned home after the Sunday School Christmas concert.

**Elaine:** What a lovely concert the Sunday School gave this evening. That must have taken a lot of practice!

**Sarah:** And the costumes! Weren't those little angels cute in their white gowns and wings?

**Jane:** And their halos! I thought for sure that Jeanie would lose hers when she bumped into the shepherd!

**Elaine:** I enjoyed the singing most of all. How did those little ones ever learn all those words? Miss Hooper must have taught them very well.

**Jane:** I liked the boys' class singing "We Three Kings," all dressed up like kings, crowns and all. They must have felt pretty special.

**Sarah:** (*Sarcastically*) I suppose you feel mighty special yourself, getting that fancy doll in the gift exchange.

**Jane:** Well, it's sure a lot nicer than that bag of peanuts you got! (*Laughing*) Somebody probably thought you were nuts and felt it was the perfect gift.

**Sarah:** And you're such a big baby, they gave you a doll to take to bed with you.

**Jane:** And you're such a monkey, they gave you peanuts.

**Elaine:** Girls, what has got into you two? Have you no Christmas spirit at all? Have you forgotten everything we heard tonight? What about the angel's song, "I bring you good news of great joy"? Christmas is supposed to be a joyful time!

**Jane:** Yes, Sarah, you're supposed to be happy.

**Sarah:** Okay, Jane, then you take the peanuts and give me your doll. See how happy you are then!

**Jane:** It's my gift, and you can't have it. I can't help that Susie got your name. Poor little raggedy Susie.

**Sarah:** Maybe you should give Susie your doll. I bet she doesn't have one. Remember, Christmas is about giving.

**Jane:** That's right. And Peggy gave the doll to me.

**Elaine:** Girls, girls, stop this arguing at once! What kind of Christmas spirit is this? Remember the carol your class sang this evening, "Love Came Down at Christmas"? Love is what Christmas is about. Love and joy. I think it's time we had a little more of that right here.

**Sarah:** Yes, Jane, show a little more love.

**Elaine:** I don't think that either of you is sounding very loving tonight. I agree--it doesn't seem fair when some get such nice gifts and others get only small ones. But I know that Susie's family couldn't afford anything more expensive. Maybe we should all be giving gifts to them.

**Sarah:** Maybe then she could give a better gift next year!

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**Elaine:** That really wasn't what I had in mind. But it's not just Susie's family that needs our gifts. I heard Miss Brown say that a number of the children at school don't even bring a decent lunch to eat. Their parents can't afford it.

**Jane:** I have an idea. Let's not have a gift exchange next Christmas. Let's buy gifts instead for the people who really need them.

**Sarah:** (*Getting excited*) We learned about a Chinese tradition in school this week. All the people gave their king a gift wrapped in plain white paper so that each one would look the same. Then no one could make comparisons. Each family gave what it was able to give, and the king accepted them all.

**Elaine:** That's an excellent idea, Sarah! We could all wrap gifts in white paper, and bring them to church for a dedication, and then take them to poor families in our community or to the shelter for homeless people. They deserve something special at Christmas, too.

**Jane:** We could call it a White Gift Service!

**Elaine:** I like that name--White Gift Service. Let's tell your dad about it. I know he'll like the idea. Now all we have to do is convince the elders!

**Sarah:** If they have the Christmas spirit, I know they'll like it, too. I can't wait till next Christmas. I think this is going to be a new tradition. (*With a flourish*) "Behold, I bring you good news of great joy." I can't wait to share it!

**Narrator:** And that is exactly what happened in that little Methodist church in Ohio in 1904. And it did become a tradition--a tradition that spread to other denominations as well. Today, Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist, and United Churches hold White Gift services every year. Not kings, but needy people benefit from these white gifts and receive good news of great joy. Let's all sing "Joy to the world, the Lord is come."