

a script from

# **231** WORSHIP

PURCHASE

SCRIPT

TO

REMOVE

**"A Gift to Die For"**

By  
Al J. Schut

WATERMARK

AT

231WORSHIP.COM

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                   |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>What</b>     | Two homeless men alone on Christmas Eve discover the true meaning of Christmas and the joy of sacrificial giving. This versatile script that delivers the Christmas message through the vehicle of script and Christmas songs (See <b>"How"</b> and <b>"Time"</b> below)                             |                   |
|                 | Themes: Christmas, Sacrifice, Giving, Humor, Peace, What Child Is This?                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                   |
| <b>Who</b>      | Jack: a homeless man who misses his family<br>Richard: a homeless man who misses his old friends                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                   |
| <b>When</b>     | Christmas Eve                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                   |
| <b>Costumes</b> | Well-worn winter clothing including coats, gloves, old pair of boots containing patches, new pair of boots, backpack                                                                                                                                                                                 |                   |
| <b>Props</b>    | Park bench, Grocery cart filled with odds and ends, covered with a blanket, tin cups, bottle of Pepsi, box of crackers, two plastic bread bags, empty pizza box, black marker                                                                                                                        |                   |
| <b>Why</b>      | Matthew 1: 18 -25, Luke 23: 32 -43                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                   |
| <b>How</b>      | The script can be used with pre-recorded Christmas songs or suggested group singing, and can include a message (e.g. pastor's reflection or short sermon) if desired. See options below. Can be used as a stand-alone sketch, a short Christmas Eve program, or a complete Christmas church service. |                   |
| <b>Time</b>     | A. Script + suggested pre-recorded music                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | = 15 - 25 minutes |
|                 | B. Script + suggested group singing                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | = 30 - 45 minutes |
|                 | C. Script + suggested group singing + message                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | = 50 - 60 minutes |

**Notes:** The script is written as Option B (See above options) with the understanding that Option A can be obtained by removing a number of group singing carols, and Option C by adding a Christmas meditation by a leader.

If you have an accessible large screen above the stage area, it can easily be used to project an image of a church upon it, while placing a park bench in the foreground to suggest a "resting place" for the actors where they "overhear" the singing of the congregation. An appropriate stand-alone sign can be placed between the park bench and the church suggesting Christmas Eve services.

Brief opening instructions from a leader can suggest the audience sings whenever the church image on the screen changes to the words of the next Christmas song. When the song ends, the screen reverts back to the church image and the dialogue between the actors continues. The audience, therefore, becomes part of the drama as they are the ones the actors have been listening to from the church behind them.

For the song "What Child is This?" use the following version, as the script refers directly to its contents:

### **What Child is This?**

**What child is this who, laid to rest  
On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom Angels greet with anthems sweet, While  
shepherds watch are keeping?**

**This, this is Christ the King  
Whom shepherds guard and Angels sing;  
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud,  
The babe, the Son of Mary.**

**Why lies He in such mean estate,  
Where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here  
The Silent Word is pleading.**

**Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,  
The cross be borne, for me, for you.  
Hail, hail, the Word made flesh,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary.**

**So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,  
Come peasant, king to own Him;  
The King of kings, Salvation brings,  
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.**

**Raise, raise a song on high,  
The Virgin sings her lullaby.  
Joy, joy for Christ is born,  
What Babe, the Son of Mary.**

*The service opens with the sounds of an acoustic guitar—either live or recorded— playing "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear." While the music softly plays lights up as **Richard** and **Jack** each begin working their way slowly from different directions towards the park bench located on stage. At this point, neither sees the other.*

**Jack:** *(pushing a shopping cart, then stopping and peering at **Richard**)* Rich? Richard Johnson? Is that you?

**Richard:** *(stopping to squint back at **Jack**)* Who wants to know?

**Jack:** Jack. Jack Carlson.

**Richard:** Jack... Carlson?

*Acoustic guitar dies out.*

**Jack:** Lakeshore Steel. Must have been, oh... ten, twelve years ago.

**Richard:** *(eyes widening in recognition)* Ah... Jacko... you were a ladle pusher back then.

**Jack:** Yep, that was me.

**Richard:** *(nodding at the memory)* That's right. 'Bout that time I think I was still working as a slag worker.

**Jack:** *(shaking his head)* Man, those were *some* days in that foundry, weren't they? I just remember that it was hotter than—

**Richard:** *(interrupting)* All I know is that I would welcome a little of that heat out here tonight! *(stomping his feet as if to keep them from freezing)* Man... it is colder than—

**Jack:** *(interrupting)* So what've you been up to since the old place closed down?

**Richard:** *(hesitating briefly, clearly embarrassed)* Oh, you know, a little of this, a little of that... right now I'm in... distribution. Um... Coca Cola...

**Jack:** Ah... Coca Cola—good company to work for.

**Richard:** Absolutely. And I get all the soda I want, for free. *(patting his backpack.)* What about you?

**Jack:** Me? *(glancing at his shopping cart, then covering the top a little more with a blanket)* Um... sales. I'm in sales. Mostly outerwear.

**Richard:** Good business to be in this time of year. Freezing cold and frozen feet—not much fun.

**Jack:** *(pointing towards the park bench located ahead of them)* Good place to take a load off right up there near that church.

*The men work their way to the park bench which faces the audience. **Jack** parks his shopping cart next to his side of the bench and **Richard** takes off his backpack and sets it on the other side of the bench. Both take a seat.*

**Richard:** *(placing his hands beneath his armpits, then shaking his head)* Can't believe after all these years... here we are sharing a lonely old park bench together on Christmas Eve.

**Jack:** Well... I just decided to go on a bit of a walk. I'm planning on meeting up with my extended family... uh, later tonight and tomorrow.

**Richard:** *(suspiciously)* Really? I don't remember you ever mentioning your family before.

**Jack:** Well, you're not my mother. I didn't have to tell you everything, you know. What are *you* doing out in the cold?

**Richard:** Oh... just a quick walk before I start getting all my gear together. I'm going out in the morning with my old buddies. We're going to do some ice fishin' like old times.

**Jack:** Least you won't spend Christmas alone.

**Richard:** No... you either.

*Both men sit in the quiet for a few moments, lost in their thoughts.*

**Jack:** Christmas sure ain't like it used to be.

**Richard:** You got that right!

**Jack:** I hate this time of year. There's no joy. People are always grumpy...

**Richard:** *(nodding)* Folks are just plain selfish. There's no giving anymore.

**Jack:** Know what I miss?

**Richard:** What?

**Jack:** On Christmas Eve a bunch of us would get together and sing carols outside, then we'd finally go in and we'd take a bottle of the best rum money could buy and we'd mix a little of that into some eggnog. *(looking off into the distance)* What I wouldn't give for a Christmas drink right now.

**Richard:** I know what you mean. I remember we'd go out ice fishing and every year I'd get a new pair of wool-lined boots just for fishin'. Nothing's more important than warm feet... when you're ice fishin', I mean. *(looking down at his own boots with patches on them)*

**Jack:** I know what you mean. I remember growing up as a little boy in a family of eight; when we got holes in our boots, *(chuckling)* we'd wear bread wrappers over our feet before putting our boots on to keep our feet dry.

**Richard** quickly glances at **Jack**, then self-consciously slides his feet further beneath the bench. As he does so, the audience –or recording– sings vs. 1 & 3 of *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*.

Both **Jack** and **Richard** lift their heads, as if listening carefully to the song coming from the nearby church. The dialogue continues when the singing ends.

**Richard:** Always liked that song. Not sure about all that peace and good will Stuff anymore, though.

**Jack:** I know what you mean. Those folks sing the same old Christmas songs every year, but nothing much ever seems to change.

**Richard:** *(laughing)* You got that right. Oh, I can almost see it now. *(forming a "director's view" with his two hands with palms out and thumbs touching. He moves his hands around towards the audience members in front of him, then stops and focuses on a specific family. He is "imagining" what the people might look like, but in reality, he will be describing perfectly what the people in front of him look like.)* I can picture them sitting all fancy and proper in their finest clothes. The mister with his navy sweater and the missus with her black slacks and her Christmas sweater with their two children beside them, impatiently waiting to go home to open presents! *(change the description to match what the individuals are actually wearing.)*

**Jack:** *(laughing)* And what's more, I bet those same people sit in that same bench every time they attend church. They probably have a little sign on the end of their pew that says: Saved for the Cleaver family.

**Richard:** *(snorting)* Cleaver family? Seriously? As in "Leave it to Beaver?" Just how old are you?

**Jack:** *(shrugging his shoulders, still smiling)* If the shoe fits, right? *(holding up a finger while music begins)* Wait a minute... I think they're ready to begin a new song.

*At this point the congregation –or recording– sings "Away in a Manger"*

**Richard:** *(speaking thoughtfully after the song concludes)* Sounds like that place must have been pretty desolate... being in a stable, and cattle and all... sometimes I think maybe I can identify. *(pausing)* Do you... do you believe all that stuff?

**Jack:** All what stuff?

**Richard:** You know... that there actually was... a baby Jesus...

**Jack:** *(pausing before answering)* I'd like to...

**Richard:** *(nodding as if in agreement)* I guess it's nice to have some kind of hope that things can get better for folks who've been kicked around in life.

**Jack:** That's one thing that's never changed... people gotta have hope...

*At this point their discussion is interrupted as the congregation begins singing "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" followed by "Joy to the World."*

**Richard:** I remember singing Christmas songs about hope as a kid. Brings back memories.

**Jack:** Me too. I really never listened to the words all that much. I just liked the feeling I got with everyone singing and seeming so happy and all. Is that what Christmas is all about?

**Richard:** What do you mean?

**Jack:** Jesus was a gift. We give gifts... and it just makes us feel good that we're doing something for someone else.

**Richard:** *(shrugging his shoulders.)* Maybe.

*At this point, the song "What Child is This?" is sung – or listened to as a recording. The recommendation for singing is to have a soloist sing the odd numbered stanzas with the congregation singing the even numbered ones as a response. Use the verses indicated in the Director's Notes.*

**Jack:** Wait... nail... spear pierce Him through?

**Richard:** Suddenly it doesn't sound all that joyful, does it?

**Jack:** *(as if making a first time discovery)* I never realized...

**Richard:** Never realized what?

**Jack:** Jesus really wasn't as much a gift... as He was a... *sacrifice*...

**Richard:** I guess I never really thought about that. *(reflecting)* How does someone even *give* that type of a gift?

**Jack:** *(more to himself than to Richard)* The gift that was actually a death sentence?

*As if just making an important decision, **Richard** takes off his backpack, unzips it and takes out two tin cups and a bottle of Pepsi Cola (rather than Coke).*

**Richard:** *(handing one of the cups to **Jack**)* Here.

**Jack:** *(taking the cup)* What's this?

**Richard:** I know we don't have any eggnog and this *(picking up the bottle of cola)* certainly isn't a bottle of the best rum money can buy...but maybe we can share a Christmas drink together. I may even have a few crackers with me.

*The congregation is led in singing "O Holy Night" or played as a recording. While the song is sung, **Jack** and **Richard** partake in their "Christmas drink." They appear to be conversing in an intimate manner and sharing the drink together, along with a cracker or two, reminiscent of something almost holy—not unlike a communion of sorts. As the song ends, **Richard** returns the bottle to his backpack.*

**Jack:** *(handing his cup to **Richard**)* Thank you. That was... *(appearing unable to know how to complete his thought.)*

**Richard:** *(putting both cups back into his backpack and zipping it back up)*  
That was... what?

**Jack:** That was... perhaps the most meaningful Christmas drink I've ever had.

**Richard:** Um... yeah... me too.

*Both men are awkwardly silent, not used to sharing their feelings.*

**Jack:** So...

**Richard:** So... *(beginning to stand, slipping his backpack onto his back)* I suppose I should be going...

**Jack:** Um... would you be interested in... maybe coming back to the bench on Sunday... *(nodding towards the church behind them)* Kind of a... followup, of sorts...

**Richard:** *(smiling, then nodding thoughtfully)* Yeah... I think I'd like that. Those folks in there can't be all bad, I suppose... right?

**Jack:** Wait... how will we know someone else won't be using the bench? I'd like to think of it as *our* bench.

**Richard:** *(nodding thoughtfully)* I know what you mean. I think we need to save it somehow. *(holding up a finger)* Wait! I think I have a marker in my backpack for a sign.

**Jack:** Great idea! I've got a pizza box we could use. *(digging through his cart and handing Richard a large empty pizza box.)* I think I can find a rock to keep it in place.

**Richard** proceeds to unzip his backpack and produces a marker, and begins writing on the box. Meanwhile, **Jack** searches behind the park bench and comes back and hands **Richard** a rock as he finishes his writing.

**Richard:** Oh, this will be perfect.

**Richard** lays the unfolded box on the bench. The bottom is resting on the seat of the bench while the top rests against the back of the bench. The top part reads "Saved" while the rest of the message would be written on the bottom, not able to be seen by the audience.

**Jack:** *(leaning over to read the sign out loud.)* Saved... for Sunday Church. Steal the bench and die? *(turning to Richard with raised eyebrows)* I'm not sure Ward and June Cleaver would have worded it quite that way.

**Richard:** *(hoisting his backpack over his shoulders while smiling)* Sometimes a person's gotta fight for his rightful place. *(turning to go.)* So... see you Sunday then?

**Jack:** See you Sunday. And thanks again for the Pep.... er... Coca Cola.

**Richard:** My pleasure. *(turning to leave)*

**Jack:** Oh... before you go. *(sits down on the bench and begins removing his boots)* I've just gotten this new pair of wool-lined boots broken in. I'd like you to have them... as a Christmas gift. *(handing the pair to Richard)*

**Richard:** *(looking incredulously at the boots and moves over the "Saved" sign to sit next to Jack)* I couldn't possibly take-

**Jack:** *(interrupting)* Of course you can! After all, you shared one of the best Christmas drinks I can remember. Besides, with my job, I've got plenty more where those came from. *(gesturing towards his covered shopping cart)*

**Richard:** *(standing after slipping on the boots)* Wow! These are amazing!

**Jack:** Great! Glad you can use them. Now you have no excuse not to meet me here on Sunday. See you then?

**Richard:** *(smiling) Sure. See you then. (giving a brief wave, he turns and walks down the aisle in the direction from where he had first come)*

*As **Jack** watches **Richard** slowly leave, an acoustic guitar plays the tune of "Silent Night."*

*After **Richard** is out of sight, **Jack** turns to his cart and lifts the blanket off the top and reaches within. Instead of pulling out another pair of boots, Jack produces two bread wrappers. He unfolds each one and proceeds to slip them onto his feet. He then reaches beneath the bench and picks up Richard's discarded boots and slips them on over the bread wrappers.*

*At this point, the guitar is replaced by the congregation singing—or a recording of—the three verses of "Silent Night." As the congregation begins singing, Jack stands up, re-centers the "Saved" sign, and leaves the stage area, pushing his cart.*

*Lights down.*