

## Christmas Play: Drowning in Grace

Written by Joanna Richards ©

First performed at Elk Lake Baptist Church, December 2015, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

**Director Notes:** This play was written to demonstrate the connection between the birth of Jesus and refugees of today, to help us see Christ and our neighbour in a new light. This play can be easily adapted to the children/teens you have. The age recommendations are just suggestions; a strong young actor can take on a part for an older child. Actions and lighting are indicated in brackets and italics.

### Actors

**Drowning Man:** Teen or adult

**Rescuer:** Teen

**Child 1:** 9 year old and up

**Child 2:** 9 year old and up

**Child 3:** 9 year old and up

**Narrator:** The narration can also be the Rescuer

**Wiseman 1:** 8 year old and up

**Wiseman 2:** 8 year old and up

**Wiseman 3:** 6 year old and up

**Mary:** 11 year old and up

**Joseph:** 11 year old and up

**Herod:** Teen or adult

**Herod Advisor 1:** 6 year old and up

**Herod Advisor 2:** 6 year old and up

**Sheep:** small children

**Angel's Voice:** Teen or adult

### Set up and Instructions:

This **play** has **six scenes** and requires PPT projection.

Each scene should have **costumes** tailored to the characters.

Recommended **props** include:

- Grand chair for Herod and other props to create a palace scene
- Sleeping mats for Mary and Joseph and other props to create a home scene
- Gifts of the Magi
- Rope

**Lights** go up and down as indicated in the script.

## Scene 1

*(The Drowning Man and Rescuer have British accents for this scene only)*

Drowning Man: Ahoy there.

Rescuer: Yes sir, ahoy.

Drowning Man: Would you be so good as to throw me that rope at your feet sir.

Rescuer: Why is that my good man?

Drowning Man: Well you see, I'm drowning sir.

Rescuer: Drowning! My word chap. Of course, I'll get it to you right away. *(He picks up the rope as Child 1 enters)*

Child 1: I wouldn't do that if I were you.

Rescuer: What? Why?

Child 1: Well do you know his name? His family? Is he friend or foe?

Rescuer: Well, my goodness, I have no idea but I don't think we really have time for all that.

Child 1: Suit yourself. It's your risk. Your risk. *(Child 1 exits as Child 2 comes on stage)*

Drowning Man: Have you almost got it?

Rescuer: Yes, almost. *(Swings the rope preparing to throw it)*

Child 2: Are you sure that he's drowning?

Rescuer: Quite sure yes. He said he was.

Child 2: People say a lot of things. They confuse needs and wants. And perhaps he hates you. You wouldn't want to save a man who hates you.

Rescuer: I'm quite sure this rope is a need my good man, and we will just have to find out if he hates me. Stand aside.

Child 2: Suit yourself. It's your risk. Your risk. *(Child 2 exits as Child 3 comes on stage)*

Rescuer: Just about there my good man, hold on. Hold on a moment more.

Drowning Man: Do you think it really will be another moment? Seems like quite a bit of chatting going on.

Child 3: I saw a man like that rescued once. It took up all his time from that day on. He never had a moment's peace.

Rescuer: What? Why?

Child 3: He was so needy. Didn't speak the language. Needed assistance fitting in and finding a job. Let people be where they are. Let them be.

Rescuer: But I'm quite sure this man is drowning. Quite sure. And if you would kindly stand aside, I will reach out and save this man.

Child 3: Suit yourself. It's your risk. Your risk.

Rescuer: Hold on!

*(Rescuer throws the rope – as the lights fade)*

## Scene 2

*(Narrator reads Luke 2 as written below as on screen images follow the story)*

*(SLIDE 1 comes on screen, it reads "Approximately 5 BC")*

Narrator: In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. *(pause)* And everyone went to their own town to register.

*(Slide 2 - image of Mary and Joseph journey to Bethlehem)*

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloth and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

*(Actors playing Mary and Joseph come on stage and sit by the manger with the baby)*

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, *(slide 3 - image of angels)* and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, *(slide 4 - more angels)* praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

*(Slide 5 - blank. Light slowly comes up on the manger scene – Mary holding the baby, Joseph behind her. Shepherds and sheep enter.)*

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

*(Lights fade)*

### Scene 3

*Lights come up on a palace scene – Herod is pacing, advisors are watching. Slide 6 is an image of Herod's Palace)*

Herod: *(speaks softly)* King of the Jews. *(getting louder)* King of the Jews. The king of the Jews has been born. *(yelling and throws something)* I am the king of the Jews! Herod! ME! I am the king of ALL!

Herod Advisor 1: Yes sire.

Herod Advisor 2: Of course you are sire.

Herod: He's in Bethlehem. Not far. Not far at all. I will fix this. You've sent for the men from the East?

Herod Advisor 1: Yes sire.

Herod Advisor 2: They will be here any minute, sire.

*(The three wise men enter - bow)*

Wiseman 1: You sent for us King Herod.

Herod: Yes. Thank you for coming. My advisors tell me you observed the rise of a special star and are seeking out the King of the Jews. Tell me, do you know exactly when that star appeared?

Wiseman 2: It was many months ago now, your highness. We have been travelling for some time.

Herod: Ah, I see. Well my advisors tell me he is in Bethlehem. *(advisors nod)* The Jews religious book says:

“But you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler, who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.

Wiseman 3: Yes, your highness. *(They bow and leave; Herod looks smug.)*

*(Lights fade)*

#### Scene 4

*(Lights come up on Mary, Joseph and Jesus at home. Slide 7 is the image of a small, ancient home).*

Joseph: Mary, do you know where my hammer got to?

Mary: I think Jesus was sucking on it earlier, in our bedroom.

Joseph: *In a frustrated tone.* Jesus! *Relaxes and smiles at Mary.* I'm feeling like we're finally getting settled here. I've got work lined up for at least the next 6 months. We're getting to know our neighbours. Jesus is sleeping in longer stretches....

Mary: I'm happy you're happy. I'm happy too.

*(Footsteps are heard outside and a knock at the door – Mary and Joseph look at each other quizzically. Joseph goes to the door. The three wisemen enter, see Jesus and kneel before him.)*

Wiseman 1: We have travelled many, many miles to find the King of the Jews.

Wiseman 2: A star has guided us from the east, to your home. We come to worship him.

Wiseman 3: And to bring gifts.

*(They unwrap their gifts and place them as they speak. Mary and Joseph exchange looks of awe.)*

Wiseman 3: I bring you gold, for you are only a baby, yet you are a king.

Wiseman 2: I bring you frankincense, a symbol of holiness and righteousness, burned as sacrificial incense to the Most High God.

Wiseman 1: And I bring you myrrh, a spice used for embalming, representing suffering and affliction.

Wiseman 2: Your son is the child of the Most High God. We honour him with our gifts and our journey. A thousand blessings on your home.

*(All wisemen bow and begin to leave)*

Wiseman 1: *(to Wiseman 2)* I hope you were keeping track of how we got here. That star won't get us home again.

Wiseman 2: I thought you were keeping track! *(They leave arguing.)*

*(Lights start to fade and they prepare to go to bed.)*

Joseph: You would think I would get used to strange occurrences, but it's surprising every time.

Mary: Oh Joseph.

*(Mary and Joseph lie down on mats as though going to sleep. The voice of the angel comes from off stage or through the sound system)*

Angel's Voice: Get up Joseph, get up. *(Joseph sits bolt upright.)*

Joseph: What? Who? Who's there?

Angel's Voice: Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him. Go. Now.

Joseph: Mary. Mary! Wake up. We must go.

Mary: *(Yawning)* What? It's not time for you to go to work yet.

Joseph: Mary! Jesus is not safe here. We are not safe. We must go.

*(Mary sits up.)*

Mary: Where are we going?

Joseph: To Egypt.

Mary: *(Mary starts to fold up receiving blankets)* We don't know anyone there Joseph! We don't speak the language. We will be foreigners.

Joseph: We can worry about that later. Leave it! We don't have time to bring anything. I'm getting Jesus. We're going.

Mary: What about these gifts?

Joseph: Quickly, grab them. We can sell the gold at the very least. We'll need it to buy supplies.

Mary: Oh God have mercy.

*(They exit. Lights go out.)*

## Scene 5

*(The lights come back up on Herod and his advisors, Slide of Herod's palace is up. They act out the narration below.)*

Narrator: The Magi had also been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

*(Lights go out, screen goes black)*

Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

“A voice is heard in Ramah,  
weeping and great mourning,  
Rachel weeping for her children  
and refusing to be comforted,  
because they are no more.”

*(Music plays as images of Mary and Joseph fleeing come on screen, followed by images of Syrian, Sudanese and Ukrainian refugees fleeing. Lights dim. Drowning Man and Rescuer come back on stage in the dark.)*

## Scene 6

*(Lights come up on the Rescuer pulling the Drowning Man up onto the stage with a rope)*

Drowning Man: Thank you. Thank you sir. I was just about done for.

Rescuer: So you really were drowning then. Do you have a name sir? Where do you come from? You don't hate me do you? Do you think you'll be quite needy? I'm rather busy you see.

Drowning Man: It's you that are needy my good man.

Rescuer: What? I just saved *you*.

Drowning Man: I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was drowning at sea and you saved me. I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.

I am Jesus.

Two thousand years ago my father entrusted a helpless baby to human care, that, in time, you might entrust your lives to his care. The world was saved through me, and now I want to save the world through you. I am born in you today child.

*Lights fade as Christmas Carol Plays and final slide with image of the star over Bethlehem.*

---

## A Word from the Author

If your congregation has used this script, please consider [donating to my writing endeavours](#). I would *love* to write full time and produce more cheese-free, Christ-honouring content.

[DONATE HERE](#)