

# Seasons of the Spirit

## Chapter Four

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### *Advent: the Season of Giving*

#### **A FAMILY MEETING**

#### **GATHER AND PRAY**

Jesus, at this time of year, help us to remember that you are the pearl of great value, the buried treasure found in a field. Your coming into the world was the beginning of peace for mankind. Through your preaching and especially how you lived your life, you showed us how to be compassionate, merciful and kind. Help us during this Advent time to treat others as we would have them treat us. Amen.

#### **Reconnect**

#### **Report on Actions**

#### **Reflection**

Carefully (Joseph) led the donkey around behind one of the inns, looking for shelter in the stable from the cold night.

As they entered, Joseph's lantern cast a dim light through the stalls and rafters. Sheep nuzzled their Jambs. Doves cooed in their feathery nests. The old cow looked at them with her deep brown eyes and moved aside to share her straw bedding with Mary.

Thus it was that only the beasts in the stable heard the first small cry as the King of Heaven was born.

*Catherine Marshall's Story Bible*  
by Catherine Marshall

- What do the surroundings at Jesus' birth tell us about what is important to "God with us"?

#### **SOCIAL INQUIRY**

"Merry Christmas, little daughters! I'm glad you began at once, and hope you will keep on. But I want to say one word before we sit down. Not far away from here lies a poor woman with a little newborn baby. Six children are huddled into one bed to keep from freezing, for they have no fire. There is nothing to eat over there, and the oldest boy came to tell me they were suffering from hunger and cold. My girls, will you give them your breakfast as a Christmas present?"

They were all unusually hungry, having waited nearly an hour, and for a minute no one spoke - only a minute, for Jo exclaimed impetuously, "I'm so glad you came before we began"

"May I go and help carry the things to the poor little children?" asked Beth eagerly.

"I shall take the cream and the muffins," added Amy, heroically giving up the articles she most liked.

Meg was already covering the buckwheats and piling the bread into one big plate.

"I thought you'd do it," said Mrs. March, smiling as if satisfied. "You shall all go and help me, and when we come back we will have bread and milk for breakfast, and make it up at dinnertime."

They were soon ready, and the procession set out. Fortunately it was early, and they went through back streets, so few people saw them, and no one laughed at the queer party.

A poor, bare, miserable room it was, with broken windows, no fire, ragged bedclothes, a sick mother, wailing baby, and a group of pale, hungry children cuddled under one old quilt, trying to keep warm.

How the big eyes stared and the blue lips smiled as the girls went in!

"Ach, mein Gott! It is good angels come to us!" said the poor woman, crying for joy.

"Funny angels in hoods and mittens," said Jo, and set them laughing.

In a few minutes it really did seem as if kind spirits had been at work there. Hannah, who had carried wood, made a fire, and stopped up the broken panes with old hats and her own cloak. Mrs. March gave the mother tea and gruel, and comforted her with promises of help, while she dressed the little baby as tenderly as if it had been her own. The girls, meantime, spread the table, set the children round the fire, and fed them like so many hungry birds - laughing, talking, and trying to understand the funny broken English.

"Das ist gut!" "Die Engel-kinder!" cried the poor things, as they ate and warmed their purple hands at the comfortable blaze.

The girls had never been called angel children before, and thought it very agreeable, especially Jo,. . . That was a very happy breakfast, though they didn't get any of it; and when they went away, leaving comfort behind, I think there were not in all the city four merrier people than the hungry little girls who gave away their breakfasts and contented themselves with bread and milk on Christmas morning.

"That's loving our neighbor better than ourselves, and I like it," said Meg, as they set out their presents, while their mother was upstairs collecting clothes for the poor Hummels.

*Little Women*  
by Louisa May Alcott

### **Observe**

1. Tell about a time when you had the chance to love

your neighbor better than yourself.

2. Little Women was first published over one hundred years ago. What are the ways within our own communities today to provide for the poor as the March girls did at Christmas?

### **Judge**

1. How does helping someone in need make you feel? How does it affect how you feel about your faith?

2. In a big, cold world, how can you best go about being examples of Jesus' love at Christmas and every other day of the year?

### **Act**

Make every day a Christmas celebration by "adopting" someone you know that has a need and then helping to fill that need (e.g., befriend a new student at school, help a classmate who is having difficulty with a subject at school, be a "mother's-helper" for a neighbor with small children who could use a hand, etc.)

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

SO many times - too many times We give so little care To those who suffer  
pangs of strife, In hunger and despair; We offer them but tiny crumbs Of what we  
have to give And know that we could give them more Of what they need to live.

We hesitate - and wait and wait For time to ease their needs Or for some heart,  
of greater wealth, To do the helpful deeds, And, while we wait, they suffer on For  
want of basic fare And cry for needs, we could appease With gifts of greater  
care.

*"Too Many Times"*  
by Michael Dubina  
quoted in *LOVING TREASURES*

Lord, help us to not hesitate any longer to offer our gifts of care, but to open our  
hearts to compassion and mercy beginning this Advent season. Amen.

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