

Waiting for the King

Children's story drama for Advent and Christmas Resources
Fall 2003 issue of *Leader*

General Guidelines

The children's story drama is an allegory set in a "medieval" time period in which kings still live in palaces and "magical" trees exist in the vein of C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia. Costumes and memorization of lines will enhance the drama. The proposed layout is that the Children's story person (who is also the narrator) and the children gather on one part of the front of the church, and the drama will take place off to the side or in other parts of the sanctuary as necessary.

The first Sunday will contain the longest drama as it also gives the background and theme for the children.

Advent 1

People can be chosen to pantomime the Narrator's part as the story is being read to keep it more interesting for the children.

Narrator (*same person who is leading children's story*): In the next few weeks we are going to learn about a place called Melville. Melville is a small village that stands in between a thick, dark forest, and a large rocky Mountain. Melville was home to a King who lived in a beautiful palace, but he didn't stay hidden away from the people who lived in the village. Many times in the late afternoon he would go walking through the village and stop and talk with the people who were finishing their day's work. Most of the people in the village loved the King because he was a wise and fair King.

The king was also very generous. One of the gifts that the King had given his people was to plant a special tree in the middle of the village. It stood tall and straight, and even in the winter its leaves stayed green, and its branches were heavy with the sweetest fruit. Anyone was free to come and eat the fruit of the tree. Every time the people in the village looked at the tree, they remembered how kind the King was to his people.

But not everyone was happy with the King. Some people didn't like the way the King ruled, and they thought they could do better. They made a plan to overthrow the King, and began to tell lies about him. Soon, there were many other people who believed the lies and began to talk bad about the King.

When the King found out about the lies that were being told about him, he was both angry and sad. He was unhappy that the people he loved would stop loving him. The King decided he would leave and let the people find out what it was like without him. The king started packing up to leave in the middle of the night.

There were some people, however, who still loved the King and did not want him to leave. As the King started to leave the village, some people stopped him and begged him not to leave. The king looked at them sadly, then gave them a smile. The king then

looked the beautiful tree, which had started to lose its pretty green leaves. “I will not return to you,” said the King. “But someday, when the people are ready, I will send my son to sit on the throne again.” He looked back at the dying tree. “Let the tree stay in the middle of the village. When you see the tree is beginning to grow leaves again, then you will know my son is coming.” After saying these words, the King picked up his bags and disappeared into the forest, while the people who loved him watched sadly.

The rest of the children’s times over the next few weeks will take place many years after the king left. Let’s meet some of the characters:

(Characters may come out and walk by as the narrator is reading.)

1) First, we have The Rulers—they are people who hated the King and now rule the land. They don’t want anyone to remember the King and put people in jail if they speak of him.

2) The Watchers---These are people who take the job of watching the tree very seriously. They often wind up wearing scruffy clothes and don’t really have a home; they just stay around the tree. The Rulers don’t like them but let them stay anyway

3) Lawkeepers—These are people who write the King’s laws down and keep them in a safe place. Many of them were killed after the king left, but now the Rulers ignore them—as long as they don’t talk about the King.

4) People in the village---These are the ordinary people like you and me. Some of them remember the King, some don’t. Many of them have grown tired of the Rulers, but they are still watching for the King’s son to return.

Let’s see what’s happening in the village.....

Scene opens with a scruffily dressed man sitting under a “dead tree.” The man is taking a nap. A grandparent and a child walk by (this can be a grandparent/child of either gender).

Child: Grandmother, who is that man (*points to man under tree*)?

Grandmother: That’s John; he is the newest Watcher. He is the one who watches for leaves to appear on the tree that will tell us the King’s son is coming.

Child (*eyeing man dubiously*): He doesn’t look like he’s doing much watching. Why is he dressed like that?

Grandmother: Well, sometimes the Watchers do things that are....different. He wears rough clothes because he spends all his time outside....and I’m afraid he doesn’t get to take a bath very often.

Child: Ewww! I’ve heard that he also eats bugs for food!

Grandmother (*shaking head*): I don't know about that. (*says off to the side*) but it wouldn't surprise me.

Child: Do you think the tree will ever grow again?

Grandmother: I don't know, dear. It's been so long since the King left, I wonder if he's forgotten us. Many people are tired of waiting, and the Rulers try to make us forget there was a King.

Child: Do you believe in the King?

Grandmother: Yes, I do. I saw him when I was very young, younger than you. But as for him sending his son, I don't know....(*sigh*)

Child: (*looking/pointing at tree*) Look, I see something!

Grandmother: I think your imagination is running away with you! Come along, we still have to go to the market!

As the child and grandmother leave, John wakes up from his nap. He slowly stands up and glances at the tree, then looks away and yawns. Something catches his eye, however, and he looks back, startled. He moves in for a closer look. His hands touch a very tiny leaf on the tree.

John: (*in near whisper*) No, can it be? After all this time?

He stares again.

John: (*whispers*) My Lord! He's coming! (*voice begins to grow louder*) He's coming; the King's son is coming (*keeps shouting this as he exits*)

Advent 2

Narrator: Last week we met the people of the village of Melville. They had been waiting a long time for the King's son to return, and they finally saw signs that he was coming. Now that the waiting is almost over, they have to learn how to prepare for the King's son to come.

A small crowd is gathered around the tree, which now is showing more signs of life. John is addressing the crowd.

Crowd member 1: What do we need to do now that the King's son is coming?

John: We need to prepare our city to welcome the King's son. Look how dirty this village has become. We need to clean up the streets, repair the gates, and clean our homes to prepare for our new King!

Crowd member 2: Why? I think this place looks just fine! *(to himself)* Besides, I'm not emptying any garbage cans, and I'm really not cleaning up after the horses....

John: It's because you've forgotten what it used to be like. Our houses used to shine inside and out, the streets swept clean of dirt. We were always prepared to receive the king as he walked our streets!

Crowd member 3: You're right; this place is a mess...how are we going to get it cleaned up in time?

John: First, every person needs to start working on his or her own home and yard; don't worry about anyone else's. Begin with the inside—clean it just like you expected the new King to come to dinner! Then, when you are done, if you see your neighbor needs help, ask if he or she wants some help cleaning up. Then, we can work on the whole village!

Two Lawkeepers are standing off to the side of the crowd, talking in secret, hushed tones.

Lawkeeper 1: *(angrily)* Just who does this Watcher think he is? He's the one with the ugly clothing who doesn't always take a bath. And he's telling us to clean up?

Lawkeeper 2: Yes, and how do we know that the King's son is coming that soon? Why, the leaves have just started growing. It could be years before the King's son returns!

Lawkeeper 1: And I, for one, think my home is perfectly fine, thank you. *(In lofty tone of voice)*. After all, I am a Lawkeeper.

Lawkeeper 2: I believe my house is cleaner...

Lawkeeper 1: *(interrupting)* Humph!

Lawkeeper 2: ...but I agree that John shouldn't be telling us what to do. I'm worried about what the Ruler's will do to us when they hear people talking about the King! For years they've left us alone. I don't like the way they treat us like pet dogs instead of people, but at least they haven't thrown anyone in jail!

Lawkeeper 1: *(eyeing the crowd)* Well, so far it looks like there is only a small amount of people who are listening. If the Rulers don't see too many people cleaning, maybe they won't think anything is going on...

Lawkeeper 2: Let's hope so.

Advent 3

Narrator: Last week we saw how the people of Melville learned they had some cleaning up to do before the new King came. And they are still waiting. Let's see what kind of things they expect to happen when the King's son returns.

Scene opens w/a parent (again, of either gender) quietly strumming a guitar or quietly playing another musical instrument. Child (can be of either gender) walks in.

Child: Dad? What are you doing? What is that?

Father: *(sighs)* It's a guitar honey. It's something that I used to play when we sang.

Child: I thought singing wasn't allowed, that's why we always have to sing very quietly before meals.

Father: You're right; the Rulers don't like singing very much. But what they really don't like is when we sing songs about the King, and about when the King lived with us.

Child: Why not?

Father: When the King lived with us, we used to have a big party every week. People would bring out their instruments, people would sing, then we would eat, and people would dance, then we would eat, then we would sing more, and then eat....Anyway, we usually celebrated the King's goodness and love he showed for us.

Child: What happened?

Father: When the King left, the Rulers didn't want us to remember him. So they said the parties were against the law. But those of us who believe the King's son will return still remember the songs we sang, and the parties we had...

Child: Will we have parties like that when the King's son returns?

Father: I'm sure we will. That's why we still sing those songs before meals and sometimes before bed, to help you and the other children in the village learn the old songs. It gives us hope for a time of celebration!

Child: Grandma says sometimes she is tired of waiting. Do you feel like that, Dad?

Father: Sometimes. But that's why I keep singing. To give me hope that the King's son is coming, and that soon we will be able to sing and dance again.

Child: *(with smart-aleck grin)* I think you just want a party for the food...

Father (*taking mock swipe at child*): Don't you have chores to do?!?

Advent 4

Narrator: The people of Melville have been waiting a long time, and last week we learned about some of the things they hope to do when the new King comes. But sometimes, it seems like the waiting gets even harder when you know the time that you wished for is almost here.

Father is quietly strumming a guitar. He suddenly hits a mischord, makes a sound of annoyance, and practically throws the guitar down. Mother walks in.

Mother: Frank, you really need to be quieter with that thing. One of the Rulers might hear you!

Frank: I'm sorry, you're right. I'm just getting so tired of waiting! I can't even concentrate on my music...

Mother: I know what you mean. Since we cleaned our house, I've started helping the neighbors get their homes ready. But I keep thinking, 'What if we've done all this cleaning, and the King's son doesn't come?'

Father: And I'm tired of not being able to sing and dance...

Mother: (*interrupting, rolling her eyes*)...and eat...

Father: (*gives her a look*)...and eat like we used to. I'm tired of these Rulers and their silly laws against singing and mentioning the King!

Mother and Father jump as a knock is heard at the door. Father peers out.

Father (*sounding relieved*): It's John, the Watcher!

Mother: So, let him in! (*John enters*) John! What's going on?

John: There have been strangers spotted coming through the forest. It must be the King's son!

Father: (*hopefully*) Is he bringing an army with him?

John: Uh, no, it didn't seem that they were armed...

Mother: No army? How is the King's son going to conquer the Rulers without swords and chariots, and...

John: Remember, the King ruled us without being violent. Why should his son be any different?

Father: But still, you would think....

Mother: John's right, Frank, the King always had powers we didn't understand. (*claps hands with excitement*) Just think, our waiting is almost over!

Father: Thank you for coming to tell us the news John. Would you like to stay for dinner?

John: Sure, now that my job as a Watcher is almost over, I'm realizing that bugs and honey don't taste as good anymore.

Mother/Father: (*together*) What???

John: I'm kidding! Maybe with the new King comes he will give us a sense of humor too....

Christmas One

Narrator: This week the people of Melville finally get what they have been waiting for for a long time. Not everybody is able to join in the party though, at least right away.

Scene takes place at the restaurant of an inn in the village. Marge and Ralph are your typical small town restaurant owner and customer—think of character's from Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon.

Customer (Ralph): Evening Marge

Restaurant Manager/Innkeeper (Marge): Evening Ralph

Ralph (sitting down at a table): Looks like you are doing quite a business at your inn here.

Marge: Yep, sure am

Ralph: Where did all these people come from?

Marge: They all came to the village because of that rumor that the King's son is returning.

Ralph: Really?

Marge: Yep, don't really believe it myself. It sure seems enough people believed it enough to come to Melville though. Every single bed at the inn is taken tonight. Sid, our cook, is going nuts back in the kitchen.

Ralph: Think Sid could find time to make me some spaghetti with his own spaghetti sauce?

Marge: If he knows it's for you, Ralph, I'm sure it won't be a problem.

Ralph: Good, I'd like to eat and get home as soon as possible. The sky looks kind of funny tonight, Marge.

Marge: Funny how?

Ralph: Well, the stars all have a funny color, and one looks especially bright. It just gives me a strange feeling.

Marge: You're probably just hungry, Ralph. Let me go give Sid your order.

At that moment a travel worn stranger comes in.

Stranger: (*wearily*) Excuse me, can you tell me where to find the manager?

Marge: That would be me; what can I do for you?

Stranger: My wife and I need a room for the night, and a place to keep our mule.

Marge: Sorry, sir, but all the rooms are taken..

Stranger: (*frustrated*) But it's this way at every inn in town!

Marge (*sounding irritated*): It's a busy time, what with that rumor that the King's son is coming.

Stranger: I have traveled very far, and my wife, she's pregnant...

Marge: Well, you should have thought better about traveling with a pregnant woman! There's room in the stable, but I really don't think....

Stranger (*interrupting*): I'll take it!

Marge: *(confused)* What?

Stranger: I said I'd take it; just point me in the right direction.

Marge: Ok, ok. Just go around back, you'll see it.

Stranger: Thank you. *(leaves)*

Ralph: What was that about?

Marge *(shaking head):* We've had some strange people, here tonight, but he was definitely weird. And then there was something about him...

Ralph: What?

Marge: Well, he had on these old clothes, and looked like he had a sorry looking mule, but I felt like I knew. *(Shakes head as if to clear it)*. Maybe all your talk about weird stars is getting to me Ralph.

Ralph: Yep.

Later, Marge is cleaning up the counter, when Bill the shepherd bursts in, scaring Marge.

Bill *(looking around wildly):* Where is he? Where's the stable?

Marge: Good grief, Bill, you could knock! *(Sniffs, then says under breath)* Not to mention washing the sheep smell off...

Bill: They said he would be in the stable!

Marge: They who? What's got into you...

Bill *(still with a wild look, gesturing wildly):* The King's messengers, thousands of them, praising the King! His son has come and is in the stable!

Marge: Look, Bill, I realize it gets lonely out there with the sheep....but I think you really ought to go home, maybe take a bath....

Bill: Just tell me where the stable is!

Marge: Ok, it's out back, but I'm telling you you'll be disappointed. All you will find is some pregnant lady and her husband and a sorry looking mule....

Bill: It's him! He has come! We need to tell everyone....but first I must see him *(runs out)*

Marge (*staring after Bill*): He really needs to get away from those sheep.....

Epiphany Sunday

Narrator: It seems that for the people of Melville, their new King has come. But not the way they expected. Word has spread about the new baby in the stable. But not everyone believes.

Scene is back at the inn/restaurant, the next evening.

Ralph: Evening Marge.

Marge (*looks up sleepily*): Yeah.

Ralph: Wow Marge, you looked tired.

Marge: It was a long night, and an even longer day. There have been all kinds of people coming in wanting to see the new baby that was born. Many of them have the idea, that it's the son of the King. Ha! Can you imagine, a helpless baby, come to save us!

Ralph: Told 'ya things were going to be kind of funny last night.

Marge: Humph.

At that moment 3 strangers walk in, they are dressed in beautiful but strange robes. One of them starts walking toward the counter. Marge stares at them suspiciously.

Marge: Can I help you?

Ralph: (*staring at something "outside"—to himself*) Are those camels?

Robed stranger #1: Yes m'lady. We have traveled a long way. To find a new King and bring him gifts.

Marge: Uh-huh. And why did you come here?

Ralph (*still staring out the window*): Those are the ugliest creatures I've ever seen!

Robed stranger #2 (*in dreamy voice*): We let the heavens guide us to this place!

Marge (*blinking*): Huh?

Ralph (*interrupting*): Hey, didn't we see you guys about 3 years ago?

Robed stranger #3(*ignoring Ralph*): He means we used the stars as our map to find the new King. Please tell us, madam, where we can find him.

Marge: Well, um, people are going to the stable, but I don't know...

Robed stranger #1: Thank you, we shall find our way there and present our gifts.

Marge: Oh, ok, sure (*stares after them as they leave—places head in hands*). I really, really need to get some sleep....

Ralph: Yep

Scene changes to the 3 robed strangers, talking quietly in another corner.

Robed stranger #1 (Melchior): Look Balshazzar, I don't see your point. I mean, we told the chief Ruler that we would tell him about the new King.

Robed stranger #2 (Balshazzar): Look, Melchior, you told me that I needed to trust my dreams. And I say I was told in a dream that we shouldn't go back to the Chief Ruler. I don't think he's up to any good.

Robed stranger #3(Caspar): I agree with Shazz. The Chief Ruler gives me the creeps. Besides, why would he want to worship someone who is just going to take his power from him?

Melchior: But he's just a little baby!

Caspar: Exactly, he's defenseless, but that doesn't mean he won't grow up to be powerful.

Balshazzar: And the people have waited for so long....

Melchior: (*waving his hands to indicate reluctant agreement*) All right, we won't go back to the Chief Ruler. Let's just wait until it's dark to sneak out, Ok?

Caspar (*sounding worried*): But that forest looks awfully dark...

Melchior: Fine, then you can get caught and thrown in the dungeon by the Chief Ruler...

Caspar (*changing his mind*): I mean, the forest looks dark in a really nice sort of way!

Melchior (*looks at Caspar w/irritation—says to himself*): I hope the journey home is shorter than the way here...