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ears ago as a young elder, I was called with others
to a hospital in Salt Lake City to provide bless-
ings for sick children. Upon entering, we noted
a Christmas tree with its bright and friendly lights and
saw carefully wrapped packages beneath its outstretched
limbs. We then went through corridors where small boys
and girls—some with plaster casts upon an arm or leg,
others with ailments that perhaps could not be cured so
readily—greeted us with smiling faces.

A young, desperately ill small boy called out to me,
“What is your name?”

I told him my name, and he inquired, “Will you give me
a blessing?”

The blessing was provided, and as we turned to leave
his bedside, he said, “Thank you very much.”

We walked a few steps, and then I heard him call, “Oh,
Brother Monson, merry Christmas to you.” Then a great
smile flashed across his countenance.

That boy had the spirit of Christmas. The spirit of
Christmas is something I hope all of us would have in
our hearts and lives—not only at this particular season
but also throughout the year.

When we have the spirit of Christmas, we remember
Him whose birth we commemorate at this season of
the year: “For unto you is born this day in the city of
David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

In our day the spirit of giving gifts plays a large role
in commemorating the Christmas season. I wonder if we
might profit by asking ourselves, What gifts would the
Lord have me give to Him or to others at this precious
season of the year?

May I suggest that our Heavenly Father would want
each of us to render to Him and to His Son the gift of
obedience. I also feel that He would ask us to give of our-
selves and not be selfish or greedy or quarrelsome, as His
precious Son suggests in the Book of Mormon:

“Verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit
of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who . . .
stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one
with another.

“Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts
of men with anger, one against another; but this is my
doctrine, that such things should be done away” (3 Nephi
11:29–30).

In this marvelous dispensation of the fulness of times,
our opportunities to love and give of ourselves are indeed
limitless, but they are also perishable. Today there are
hearts to gladden, kind words to say, deeds to be done,
and souls to be saved.

One who had keen insight into the Christmas spirit wrote:
I am the Christmas Spirit—
I enter the home of poverty, causing pale-faced children to open their eyes wide, in pleased wonder.
I cause the miser’s clutched hand to relax and thus paint a bright spot on his soul.
I cause the aged to renew their youth and to laugh in the old glad way.
I keep romance alive in the heart of childhood, and brighten sleep with dreams woven of magic.
I cause eager feet to climb dark stairways with filled baskets, leaving behind hearts amazed at the goodness of the world.
I cause the prodigal to pause a moment on his wild, wasteful way and send to anxious love some little token that releases glad tears—tears which wash away the hard lines of sorrow.
I enter dark prison cells, reminding scarred manhood of what might have been and pointing forward to good days yet to be.
I come softly into the still, white home of pain, and lips that are too weak to speak just tremble in silent, eloquent gratitude.
In a thousand ways, I cause the weary world to look up into the face of God, and for a little moment forget the things that are small and wretched.
I am the Christmas Spirit.¹

May we each discover anew the Christmas spirit—even the Spirit of Christ.

NOTE
The Perfect Christmas Eve
By Jerie S. Jacobs

When I was growing up, one of the highlights of every year was Christmas Eve. My family and I made pizza, went caroling, and then gathered for a Christmas devotional. We sang hymns in shaky four-part harmony and blasted out carols on our odd assortment of musical instruments. Dad always ended the evening with a Christmas thought that left us in happy tears. Life didn’t get any better than Christmas Eve.

When I was a little older, my mom began taking care of a young neighbor, Kelly. Kelly came over to our house every day after school while her mom, Patty, worked. Kelly followed me around like a puppy—loud and needy. It was always a relief when Patty collected her daughter and left my home and family in peace.

One December, I was horrified when mom invited Patty and Kelly to join us for Christmas Eve. My Christmas Eve. Mom smiled and assured me, “It won’t change a thing.” But I knew better. They would eat all our pizza. Kelly would make fun of our singing. I resigned myself to the worst Christmas Eve ever.

When the evening came, Patty and Kelly joined us, and we talked and laughed and sang. My mother was right. It was perfect. At midnight they thanked us and reluctantly parted. I went to bed with a full heart. I discovered that the truly precious gifts of Christmas are not diminished when shared. Instead they sweeten and multiply when we give them away.

Five Christmas Gifts
President Monson said that we might want to think about which gifts the Lord would want us to give to Him or to others.

Circle the five children in the picture who are serving others. How are their actions gifts to Jesus?