

# The GIFT

**By Monica C. Webster**

(Based on a true story)

*Tell the true story of Jesus' birth, when, as a baby, he came to the earth (Children's Songbook, 52–53).*

**S**nowflakes fell as Sofia stepped outside. Snow usually made her happy. But this year, things were different. She bent down and scooped up some snow in a bowl, then went back inside.

The kitchen was warm, and Mama was at the stove cooking breakfast. Sofia dumped the snow into a pot so it could melt. They would use the melted snow for washing their hands and faces.

“Merry Christmas, Sofia,” Mama said.

Sofia wanted to say Merry Christmas back, but the words stuck in her throat as she walked toward the barn to help feed the animals. The barn was attached to the house by a long hallway, and Sofia was grateful she didn't have to go outside again.

Papa and her older brother Isak were already in the barn when she got there. A knot formed in Sofia's stomach as she looked around. Cows, goats, and sheep were chewing their breakfast. Chickens pecked around her feet. But the barn was a lot emptier these days.

A month ago, some of their animals got sick and died. People in the community were afraid the disease would spread to other farms, so Sofia's family's farm

had been quarantined. That meant no one was allowed to visit or leave their farm until they could be sure the sickness was gone.

Sofia had not seen any of her friends. She could not go to school or church. Her family could not sell their milk or go to the store. They were like prisoners on their own farm.

“Merry Christmas, Sofia!” voices squealed when Sofia returned to the kitchen. Her little brother and sister, Frej and Kaia, were sitting at the table eating bits of bread soaked in milk.

“You won't have any room in your tummies for dinner!” Sofia said, smiling.

“Not that it matters,” she thought. Christmas dinner was going to be the same food they'd been eating for a month. Bread. Potatoes. Dried vegetables. All things they had stored from summer. They couldn't even afford to eat one of their chickens. Who knew how long the quarantine would last?

“Hey, everyone,” Isak said, coming in from the barn. “Get your coats on. I want to show you something.”

Isak led them through the pine forest near the farm.

“Are we going to cut down a Christmas tree?” Kaia asked.





“I don’t think so,” Sofia said. “We can’t go to the store to buy decorations. We don’t even have any presents to put under it.”

Kaia and Frej looked disappointed, but soon they were running through the snow, trying to see who was fastest.

“Wait!” Isak called after a few moments.

Sofia peered into the forest. “What’s that?” she whispered.

There was a little click, and suddenly a light flared in the darkness.

“Oh!” they all gasped.

In front of them was a table built from fallen branches. A small stable made from moss sat on top, and inside was their

family’s Nativity set. Angels, shepherds, and Wise Men gathered around Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus. A small lightbulb in the roof of the stable lit the scene.

Kaia and Frej stared, fascinated. Sofia stared too. It was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen.

“Merry Christmas,” Isak said.

And suddenly Sofia knew that it was. There would be no presents, no tree, and no special dinner. But there would always be the precious gift of the Savior. And that was enough. ♦

**“Christmas is more than trees and twinkling lights, more than toys and gifts. . . . It is the love of the Son of God for all mankind.”**

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008)

