For Christine, Christmas Eve wasn’t the exciting time for her family of seven like it was for everyone else’s. Pulling on her tattered coat that morning, Christine sighed, thinking about her youngest sister Letty. She wanted new sneakers for gym and Christine had been saving up for them. But when Willy had gotten sick, it had taken everything the family had to ensure they could pay the medical bills. Christine also knew Momma had splurged a bit on Christmas dinner for the family.

Full bellies are better than Christmas sneakers anyway, right? Christine thought, kicking an old stone on the ground.

A gust of wind picked up, sending Christine’s schedule sailing out of her hands.

“Darn it,” she muttered, chasing it across the street.

The paper floated into the town nativity scene, catching on baby Jesus’ manger. Grabbing up her paper, Christine smiled down at the sweet baby Jesus. Shae said a small prayer for her family and took one last look at Jesus before walking away. As she was walking, she noticed a small elderly woman get up from a bench just outside the nativity scene. A small slip of paper seemed to fall out of her purse as she put it on her shoulder.

Christine knew her family would be waiting for her, but she rushed over to the bench to grab up the piece of paper the woman had dropped. She gasped, realizing the paper that had fallen out of the woman’s purse was actually not one, but two folded hundred-dollar bills. Christine looked at the money greedily, her heart yearning to use the money to give her family a nice Christmas.

With shaking hands, she picked up the money – almost stuffing it her pocket. But she knew that wouldn’t be right. With a sigh of resignation, she turned and called out to the woman.

“Ma’am,” she shouted, running towards her. “You dropped something.”

The woman turned toward her curiously.

“You dropped this.” Christine said, handing her the money and quickly swallowing back a lump in her throat.

The women eyed her quizzically.

“Thank you, my dear.”

Her voice was smooth and warm, just like Christine’s Gram, who had just passed on a few months back.

“No problem, Ma’am,” Christine smiled.

Christine turned to walk away when the woman stopped her and asked, “What’s your name, my dear?”

Christine's smile widened a little further. “Christine Darling, Ma’am.”

The woman, who Christine noticed had warm, sad eyes, smiled slightly.
“This is going to sound like an odd request, Christine, but would you mind chatting with me for a bit?”

“Not at all,” Christine answered, wanting to spend a bit more time with this woman that reminded her of her Grandmother.

Over the course of the next hour, Christine chatted pleasantly with Martha. Martha told her about the devastating loss of her daughter.

“You remind me so much of her,” Martha commented, grabbing Christine's hand and wrapping it in warmth.

Christine smiled, squeezing her hand back.

Silence filled the air, so Christine started telling Martha her own family's story.

The minutes blended into hours until her nose was a little numb. Looking at her, Martha stood up.

“Your family will be missing you, for sure.” Martha smiled, pulling Christine's coat a bit tighter around her body.

Abashed, Christine looked at her phone, noticing for the first time all the messages.

“Right!” she muttered hurriedly, giving Martha a gentle hug.

She was about to walk away when she said, “I should really apologize to you.”

“For what, sweetheart?”

Christine sighed.

“Well, I nearly took that money you dropped -- but I'm glad I didn't. I wouldn't have met you otherwise.”

Martha smiled.

“I'm glad as well.”

“I know it won't be much, but if you're lonely tomorrow, you're more than welcome to our family Christmas. Mom went all out so there will be lots to eat.”

Martha's smile reached her eyes.

“If I do come, should I bring something?”

Christine just shook her head with a smile, and they parted ways. Stopping again at the nativity scene, Christine said a small prayer thanking God for introducing her to Martha and asking if there was any way that he could help her to get Letty those shoes she'd been asking for.

The next morning, as Christine was rubbing the sleep from her eyes, all she could make out was Letty's piercing squeal. “PRESENTS!”

Rushing down the stairs, Christine's eyes widened at the bounty of gifts overflowing through the open door.
Her sister Letty ran at her with a wide smile and shining eyes, clutching a pair of sparkly new white sneakers.

“Look at these shoes, Christine!” Letty squealed.

Christine turned to her mother in confusion. Her momma’s eyes were a mixture of shock and bountiful happiness.

Pulling the door open wider revealed a small slip of a woman.

“Martha?” Christine said questioningly, looking at the woman in confusion.

Martha smiled at her sweetly.

“I know you said I shouldn’t bring anything but...” her smile widened, “You were truly the answer to my prayers last night. The glint of your eyes and the shine of your smile made me feel like I got to talk to my daughter one last time. When I wanted nothing more for Christmas than to join her, a beautiful” her eyes crinkled, “and honest, angel sat with me and pushed away my despair. Because you answered my prayer, I felt God wanted me to answer yours.”

Pulling Christine into a hug, she said, “Merry Christmas, my dear.”

Moral of the Story: God is always listening. And answering someone else’s prayers might just be the answer to your own.

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ Acts 20:35. ESV

Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:12-13, NIV