

**Time flows like a never ending stream
takes so many Christmases on its
way. Now we are again, back in one
more Christmas season.**

Personally this season makes me more contemplative. As years progress, what becomes so striking is that Christ is slowly being displaced from all our festivities. Am not speaking about the non Christian world, but the world of believers. There is some warm bubble of sentimental strings attached with Christmas. Individuals would think of home, smell of cakes, decorating the house, the inevitable biryani and so on. The Churches, the more traditional kind , would be so bent on carol service, which is the highlight of the year and in free churches there is yet another tradition of going round for carol rounds, splurging on decorations which differ from traditional churches. These will not be wrong if the center still is Jesus Christ, that is if everything is only done to bring glory to Him alone.

But somehow frighteningly I see that we get too happy about the occasion and all the events, finally , not deliberately, though, forgetting the very hero of this occasion.

Do we make glad the heart of God by our beautiful choir singing or by flaunting the biggest star in the town or by purchasing the costliest sari or suit?

No ,my view is not that the things above are sinful or redundant, but do we really do all the things with the right spirit that God would

nod assent. Is my best singing for God or simply to gain appreciation from the mass?

Again I want to go back to the real spirit of Christmas or the very reason why Jesus was born. This is more important today than ever before.

Christ came into this world to save sinners. Christ being God need not have stooped so low as to be born as a man of flesh and blood. God could have easily conceived another salvation plan without needing to send His Son through the womb of a woman which He created in the first place. Yet Jesus was born through a mother's womb. And lived with ordinary people and shared the bread of hard work of fishermen, shared a joke with tax collectors. But He still was God yet He chose to partake the lot of human beings not for money but for love. He became friends with every kind of person. Heaven touched the earth. Everything about Christmas, Christ is about love, relationship and love.

Again at this time, I want to check my heart and see whether my life is characterised by the character of Jesus. Not just the day of Christmas alone, do I feed some unfortunate orphans etc, but would people identify me with the God I worship. This is the real challenge of a Christian. To be identified with Christ, the God whom they profess to worship.

Somehow am so pained to see a crowd of affluent Christians(our affluence is only an undeserved gift from God), distance themselves from their less unfortunate brethren especially non Christians. At times am so aghast to hear so called good and sanitized Christians shunning the company of non Christians. I shudder what would have happened if Zeigenbalg , William Carey or

Amy Carmichael had thought so. Am glad they had the love of Jesus to love the basest sinner and the unprivileged ears which have never heard the name of Jesus even once.

Am really worried about this getting- together- only -with - Christians mentality which gathers momentum in this corporate world. We are becoming too isolated. Am glad that many of my friends who were non Christians when I first met and now many are Christians. I still have many non Christians complain that they feel so belittled by the so called holy Christians(read born again/Spirit filled), who look down upon them as unsaved-lost-hopeless sinners. You know biblically this is the typical attitude of Pharisees. Imagine the scene when the Pharisees brought the prostitute caught red handed to Jesus or the scene where a Pharisee and a tax collector prayed in the Temple. It was the tax collector who went home justified, not the self righteous Pharisee.

I do not mean to say that you have to be pulled in by the unChristlike activities, but they should be pulled to Jesus by you. Years ago when I was a PhD student late one night, after the whole hostel went to bed, someone knocked my door . A girl came in hesitantly and she said that she is at the end of rope, almost on the verge of suicide and since someone in the hostel said that she could speak to me , she came over. When I welcomed her, out came one of the most piteous stories ever. She was from a wealthy financier family and when one thing went wrong there was bankruptcy, the father arrested, mother in hiding and she in hostel stranded without any money. I honestly did not know what to tell her, but prayed with her with a verse. She went a little after midnight, I heard a knock early morning at 6 am and there she stands with a big smile and with a verse, saying God spoke to her , not to give His glory to

another, from then on she loves the Lord with all her heart. It was certainly not me, it was God, but she knew I was there available. I was just there for the love of the Lord to flow through her. It was God who worked. Sometimes I ask myself how many times I had not allowed the Spirit of God to flow through me, when I had been bitter or proud or when pretending to be too busy for individuals.

Even today the world has enough of hurting people. If people around us know we are approachable and are willing channels for the love and healing of Christ, the Lord Himself will send such people to us. I see that in my life time and again. Somebody drops in suddenly or there is an SOS call, because they know there will be a listening ear. This is also my prayer that my heart and ear is always open for even the least of folks. If you are haughty and proud, or in other words if your conversation is always on how much you spent on the Woodland shoe, the Hidesign handbag, your Saville Row suit and so on.. people with real problems will go very far away from you. I'm not implying that you always have to be in mourning, but when you stop your non-stop chatter about you, your family, your dog, your TV, your new mobile, then slowly hurting people will come closer to you, thinking they may find a loving heart in you.

I throw a challenge before you. If you really want to be a channel of God, ask God to use you and in any chance of conversation, do not flaunt what your money has got for you, but testify what Grace of God has done in your life, even in this avoid talk of money, (like – the grace of God enabled me to get a BMW this Christmas etc). You would be surprised how God could use you, if in your heart you glorify God instead of the things which the Lord has enabled you to buy or purchase with filthy lucre.

Let me not wish the stale Happy and Merry Christmas, but a meaningful life where your life is not only identified with Christ, but also may your lives be a channel where the living water flows out and makes many to live. God bless.

When can we ever say boldly like Paul for **I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body!**

Dear Lord help us all to be more like you. Help us to set our eyes on things above, not on the perishable gifts, but on you, the Author and Finisher of our Faith. I pray that the savour of Christ be on our lives. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.