

Personal Prayer : Private or Public?

“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray **standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men.**

Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.^[b] ⁷ Mathew 5-6

Meditating deep, the words of Jesus will surely ruffle many feathers. It is like stirring a hornet's nest. No wonder Jesus was hated by the religious people, people of the synagogue/church.

He launches a frontal attack at the prayer of hypocrites, who were obviously the most religious people. They must have been the Pharisees and the Saducees. Their exhibitionist religiosity was obnoxious to Jesus. Jesus was not against public prayer, but He was concerned with the motive. Public prayers when prayed after hours of prayer in private will reap a mighty harvest! No doubt about that.

But how do we use the gift of prayer is the point of contention here.

Even today a person who bears the name of the Lord, or in other words a minister of God, is deemed with much respect. S/he is regarded holy, set apart and one who is a bridge between the lay person and God.

This gives them immense power and they start to flaunt their ministerial skills everywhere, at the corner of the street, at big budget public platforms, so that they may be seen and rewarded. Somehow star preachers rarely go to private poor homes to pray for them, excusing themselves to be too busy.

Indian Classical tradition of religious singing and dancing always culminates in a public performance, the katchery(கச்சேரி) for songs or arangetram

(அரங்கேற்றம்) for dance. The deep rooted Indian classical arts scene is complete only with the stage performance. The completion lies in staging the performance and the reception it receives. The artist is foregrounded in the stage, dressed splendidly and s/he gets all the glory.

Sadly this staging of performances have slowly , steadily and surely has crept into modern day Christendom as well. So many concerts, prayer festivals, talent shows etc have become a phenomenon. Everyone needs approval from an audience at least a round of applause. These public stages have also spawned this microphone desire. The love to be seen and heard has become a possessive and obsessive desire for these

minister performers who also demand to be videographed. Worse still some worship leaders worship only with camera and camera technicians as the audience.

The paradigm of pastor, minister, evangelist / sheep is now slowly being replaced with performer/audience , Producer/consumer type.

Recently I heard a church is going to host a Kalakkal Carnival this Sunday. It was advertised in TV. I was grieved to hear the word Carnival. Being a language person, I know the meaning of this word Carnival. The root word of Carnival stems from sensual pleasure.(**Root CARN Meaning : (flesh) Example : CARNELIAN, REINCARNATE, CARNAGE, CARNAL, CARNATION, CARRION, CARNIVAL, CARNIVOROUS ,** http://www.myvocabulary.com/dir-root-root_master) This festival was first instituted to celebrate Dionysius the Greek God of wine, where there was enough wine and sex. Sad now our churches have to be pepped : up by carnivals and festivals.

³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? (Galatians 3,3)

Why do we need carnivals where God has to be worshipped with a grateful and reverent heart?

Why is there no intimacy in our relationship with God?

Intimacy would demand privacy.

That is why Jesus said your prayer should be from the heart and in private and not simply words on a platform with a microphone in hand.

How is our relationship with God? Is it only during public services, worship times and prayer meetings?

Have we really lost the habit of closeting with God in secret?

Are we forgetting the basics of our faith?

Are we replacing the teachings of Jesus, with what suits the age?

Are we tagging along with the zeitgeist (spirit of the times/age) rather than holding on to the timeless truth?

This platform and microphone culture of today's Christendom has turned the glory that is due only to the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings, to ourselves.

This is scary. The Lord will not allow anyone to touch His glory. Yet the Christian performers of today, have little regard for the glory of God.

Let us get back to God and pray with John the Baptist, "Let Him increase and me decrease."

Oh Son of David have mercy on us....