

Reading: Luke 2:8-18

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (Jn 3:16)

Christmas is celebrated in India largely in Western style. Christianity is still thought to be the religion of the whiteman. So our non-Christian friends hesitate to participate in Christmas celebrations. Christ was not born in the East or the West, but in the Middle East. Announcing the birth of Christ, the angel told the shepherds that it was good tidings of great joy to “all” people, not just to any particular community (Lk 2:10).

Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, came to India in the very first century with the message of Jesus Christ. Christianity is two thousand years old in this country. Hence it is a crime if we the Indian Christians still wrap the message of Christ in the Western jacket. Here are some tips to celebrate Christmas the Indian way—

☆ Christmas may be called as “*Kiristhu Jayanthi*.” Invite non-Christian neighbours to your Christmas dinner!

☆ During carol rounds, plan to visit non-Christian homes in the neighbourhood, not in the middle of the night but in the pleasant evening! Set the carols to Indian music. Let the words in the carols be simple, direct and clear. Present each non-Christian family with a Christmas-message greetings card or a New Testament.

☆ Send Christmas cards — designed with Indian cultural settings in mind and greetings presented in vernaculars — to as many non-Christian friends as possible. The picture of a stocking on a Christmas card is obnoxious to the Indian mind.

☆ It is good to bring about a change in Christmas decorations too. It will be typically Indian if mango leaves are used instead of casuarina or pine leaves. A Indian *kuthuvilakku* (lampstand) is preferred to a candle. Christ’s Gospel is transcultural, not anticultural!

☆ Plan a special Christmas service for the non-Christians in Churches, homes and offices. Take special care that these services are appealing to the Indian mind and acceptable to the hesitant hearts. Gifts may also be presented to them. Don’t leave non-Christian



children out of Christmas tree functions and competitions. Use Christmastime advantageously to share with non-Christian families the love of God revealed through Christ.

Apostle Paul liberated the Gospel from the Jewish clothing and Martin Luther from the Latin clothing. Now it is our responsibility to liberate it from the Western clothing!

Gracious Heavenly Father, we worship You as the God of Love; You have loved mankind so much that You gave up Your only Son for our Salvation. We worship You as the God of Grace; You have been so gracious to us that You spared us but punished Your Son for our forgiveness. We worship You as the God of Mercy; You have been so merciful to us that You let Your lofty Son take the lowly form of a man to sympathise with our weaknesses. We worship You as the God of Faithfulness; You have broken through all barriers to fulfil the Edenic promise of sending Your Son as the Messiah. If You have not spared Your beloved and only begotten Son but given Him up for us all, what will You withhold from us, O God? We thank You with grateful hearts and tearfilled eyes. Blessed be Your Holy Name!

Father God, we thank You for the virgin birth of Jesus proving that nothing is impossible for You. We thank You for His sinless life on this sin-stained earth encouraging us that victorious life over sin is possible in this world. We thank You for His substitutionary death which makes us acceptable to You through His shed blood. We thank You for His triumphant resurrection filling our hearts with joyful expectation of our life in the Glory Land. We thank You for His ascension which has seated us in the heavenlies with Him to enjoy all the spiritual blessings. Thank You for His advocatory ministry at Your right hand so we can enter Your Throne of Grace anytime with a clear conscience. Thank You for His promised Return to take us to Your heavenly mansions to be with You forever and ever. Glory to You in the Highest!

Dear Lord, we come to You for the millions who have not yet heard the Good Tidings of great joy that Jesus came as the Saviour of all men. The light that has shone in our hearts has not yet thrown its beams into the hearts of millions in the kingdom of darkness. We accept before You the moral responsibility for our failure in carrying the light of the Gospel to those in spiritual darkness, especially in our Land of India. Forgive us our Christmas celebrations which entertain Christians only. Help us liberate the Gospel from its Western clothing as Your Servant Paul liberated it from the Jewish clothing. Grant us the practical wisdom with which he addressed the crowd in the idolatrous city of Athens. Help us become all to all men so we might save some. We pray in the Name of Jesus who identified Himself perfectly with us sinners. Deepen our conviction that the Gospel is the message for this mess-age! Amen!

*(Jn 3:16; 14:1-3; Psa 100:5; 2 Cor 1:3; 4:4-7; Heb 2:18; 4:15,16; 7:25,26; 2 Tim 2:13;
Lk 1:37; 2:10,11,14; Eph 1:3; 2:4-6; 1 Jn 2:1,2; 1 Cor 9:19-22; Acts 17:23; 26:18)*