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Psalm : 85:8-13

CCI · 25 December 2022

READINGS
Old Testament : Isaiah 9:2-7

Epistle : Ephesians 1:3-14

Gospel : Luke 2:1-14

Verse for meditation: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his

favor rests.” (Luke 2:14)

‘The birth of Jesus Christ’ is the physical expression of God who is always in fellowship with men. The angel told Joseph regarding the name of Jesus Christ that He would be called ‘Immanuel’ which means ‘God with us.’ The message of Christmas is the message of the fellowship of God with men. It is beyond human comprehension that a God who is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, self existing, eternal and holy is living with men. But this realization is a blissful experience at the same time. Therefore, Christmas becomes a joyful celebration. Through this message we will discuss the idea of ‘God with us’ as found throughout the Bible. Secondly, it examines the context in which Isaiah had the vision of ‘Immanuel’ and finally the message of Christmas is seen as a great command which compels the Church to involve in evangelization.

God and man walked together in the Garden of Eden when God created man. It was God’s garden but when man disobeyed God and committed sin he was sent out of the garden. Following this God selected a few and walked with them only. Eanoch and Noah are good examples of this (Genesis 5:21-24; 6:8, 9). Then in the Book of Exodus, God required man to build a tent of meeting to live with man (Exodus 25:8). God was again with the people of Israel during their journey in the wilderness as the ‘pillar of cloud’ and ‘pillar of fire’ (Exodus 40:34-38). God walked along with Moses and Joshua doing supernatural miracles (Exodus 33:12-16, Joshua 1:5) and continued to fill the holiest of holies in the temple with His presence that Solomon has built for God. Thus, we find God in the Old Testament as He was with certain persons and at certain places, along with the people to be there to lead them. Today, we

meditate upon God who has become Immanuel. Jesus said to his disciples, “Behold I am with you till the end of the earth….” (Mat.28:20). “I will not leave you astray” (John 14:18). After the earthly ministry of Jesus he has sent the Holy Spirit to be with us and to instruct and guide us (John 14:16,26; 16:8-13; 2 Cor.13:14). After this period even the second coming of Christ is also recorded with these words, “Behold the tent of God in the midst of men” (Revelation 21:3). Thus, the character of God as one who is with man can be seen from the book of Genesis to Revelation at different times. May God help us to realize His ‘ever presence’ as we celebrate the birth Christ who has come as ‘Immanuel.’ There was no room for Jesus to be born even in the Inn – who came as the prince of peace and Immanuel. The Lord is looking for people who are ready to give a place to Christ who is always with us.

I. A place in the heart for the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:2-7)

Christ came to this world as light to the people who were walking in darkness. He is born as wonderful minister, mighty God, everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. But when his parents came to Bethlehem from Nazareth they had no place even at the inn for Jesus to be born. Shall we submit ourselves at this Christmas that Jesus Christ will be born in us (Gal 4:19) as the Prince of Peace in our hearts.

II. The grace shared by the Prince of Peace (Ephesians 1:3-14)

Ephesians 1:3-14 explains about the divine election that happens through Jesus Christ by the grace of God. Man needs the grace of God to know Christ and to give one’s heart for Him. Thus, those who are elected by the grace should become ‘a place’ for others.

III. Finding space for the Prince of Peace: Good News of great joy for all people (Luke

2:1-14)

The angel of Lord announced to the Shepherds regarding the birth of Jesus as follows.
But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (LK2:10 NIV). Almost two thousand years have passed since the birth of Jesus Christ. So, this Christmas reminds us of our duty to communicate this message of great joy to all people. As we have come to know the Lord all others should also know Him. Out of the 6 lakh villages in India people of 4 lakh villages have not yet known Jesus as they ought to know. We have a great responsibility to make them know this message. Saint Paul says, “It has

always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation (20). Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about Him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." (Romans 15:20, 21 NIV). When Paul wanted to preach the gospel at Asia and Bithuniya, the Spirit of the Lord has not allowed him for that. But on the same night he had a vision. This is known as the Macedonian call. Macedonia is in Europe. Gospel had not yet reached there. Paul wants to go to Macedonia. The Gospel should be preached to the unreached places (Matt. 23:14). Then only this would become a great joy to all people. Preach to all creation, all people groups (Mark 16:15; Matt.28:18-20). This is the message in the great command of Jesus. The message of Christmas is a command for the evangelization of the whole creation.

Prayer: God, the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, Who became a human being, to be born of a virgin and laid in a manger, to live as 'Immanuel', to be obedient even unto the death upon a Cross, Make our hearts humble enough to offer space for the Prince of Peace so that we may experience and share the Good News of Your salvation for all, Through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever more.

Amen.

December -31

Year ending

Come to the Lord with Thanksgiving

Old Testament

2 Samuel 6:1-15

Psalm 91

Epistle

Colossians 3:12-17

Gospel

Luke 17:11-19

Verse for meditation:

“Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have
been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’ …… “The second
came and said ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.” (Luke 19:17, 18)

Today, the last day of the year as we look back we are bound to thank God for all his wonderful guidance throughout this year and come to his presence with praise and thanks giving. “… and be thankful” (Col. 3:15). This is the teaching of the word of God. Not only for the past year, let us thank God of each and every day of our lives. In the days of the Old Testament, thanksgiving offering was offered to God (Lev.7:11-21). The first fruit was also offered as a thankoffering (Deut. 26:1-11). Thanking God honestly from the bottom of our hearts is also a thank offering (Heb 13:15; Hos. 14:2; Psalms 69:30, 31; 119:108). Saint Paul taught to request God all our needs with thanksgiving (Phil. 4:6, 7). Always give thanks for everything (Eph 5:19, 20; 1Thes.5:18). Paul gave such admonitions. He who offers the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies the Lord (Psalms 50:14, 23).

1. Offers heart felt Thanksgiving (2Sam6:1-15)

David says to praise God. The incidents related to the situation when the Ark of the Covenant has been brought from the house of Abhinadab are being related here. Out of ignorance David was bring the ark in bullock cart which was supported to be carried by the priests. God was angry and the bullocks were frightened. Uzzah lifted up his hand and held the ark as to prevent it from falling. But God’s anger killed Uzzah then and there. Learning a lesson from the incident afterwards David brought the ark as required by the law (2 Sam.6:12-23). He learns that praising and worshipping God should be according to God’s rules. Thankoffering should be offered that the Lord will accepted it (Lev. 22:29). Unleavened bread (thin bread) and cakes are to be offered to God as thankoffering (Lev. 7:12-14; Deut 26:1-11). Unholy life and false devotion are represented by the leavened dough (1 Cor. 5:7, 8; Lk 12:1; Matt. 16:12).

2. Come to the presence of the Lord with thanksgiving (Lk 17:11-19).

Ten lepers were healed. Only are person came back. He praised God aloud. He fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. Seeing the devotion of this Samaritan Jesus asked “Ten are healed where are the nine others?” (Lk 17:18). This incident helps us to remember all benefits what the Lord has done and come to his presence and give thanks to him. The former American president George Washington celebrated the 3rd October 1789 as ‘thanksgiving’ day. Even to

day, this day is being observed to thank God and men. The famous writer and counselor Norman Vincent Pele said, “Look back to book a head”. When we are stumbled in our progressing journeys our past experiences encourage us – the ways in which the Lord has lead us.

3. Always give thanks (Colo.3:12-17).

Paul challenges us not only during the worship services but always to be with thankful heart (Eph 5:19, 20; Colo. 3:15-17; 1 Thess. 5:18). In all words and actions always thank God. Thank both God and men.

Prayer:

Everlasting God, the Creator and sustainer of the whole creation, our times are in Your hands; as You have brought us to the end of a year in ways mysterious to us, enable us to put our trust in You fully so that we may truly experience Your blessings each day of our lives and also inherit life eternal; through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever more.

Amen.