

Devotional blog - Christmas Message

This year is the strangest year that I have experienced in my life, probably it's yours too. The pandemic and all its consequences have changed the way we live, work, study, shop, socialise and even worship. When we enter the festive Season of Christmas, whatever we are going through in our lives tends to be amplified further. If you can see your loved ones at Christmas time, it's even sweeter. If you are experiencing grief from the past year, Christmas time is even harder to bear. So, is this Christmas a Merry Christmas or a Messy Christmas to you?

When we read the very first Christmas story in the bible from Luke 2:1-18, it was a messy time for Mary and Joseph. A heavily pregnant mum-to-be and her husband were called to follow the consensus, and the government guidelines of their day, to register at their home town of Bethlehem, for Joseph was descended from the family of King David. The journey from their home in Nazareth of Galilee to Bethlehem was about 70 miles south and it took roughly 4-5 days to get there under normal circumstances by foot.

By the time they arrived there, "No room", cried from the Innkeepers! Not once, not twice but three times they were turned away. Driven by desperate need, they had no choice and took a space in a dirty, smelly and bare stable to give birth to a baby. No mother would have wanted to give birth in that condition, and no father would have chosen that setting for his beloved partner if it was within his power.

In the face of all these unthinkable conditions and unbelievable chaos, Mary and Joseph made the best they could. Struggling with this appalling reality and far away from their comfortable home, they braved the groaning pains of childbirth, and welcomed this precious new life into the world.

And the moment Jesus was born, not only was the prophecy fulfilled, but the whole world including the life of Mary and Joseph was changed forever.

In such a basic and inadequate setting, Mary and Joseph were “gifted” by God and were called to retrieve who they really were and God’s love within them - to love God in the form of a baby boy regardless of the circumstance. Unexpectedly, this messy turmoil was transformed into a merry occasion. In this fragile newborn baby, the Word became flesh, Almighty God of the heavens and all creation was stooping down to meet us, full of grace and truth to rekindle the loving relationship given to us, in and through the Christ Child. It was the beginning of a new hope.

No doubt, the pandemic has stripped us to bare minimum and perhaps may have exposed our inadequacy this Christmas. No matter how messy it may be, God has gifted us Jesus, his begotten son. He is here in our struggles, grief, loss and fears to tell us that God takes risk to trust in us and invite us to retrieve the self-giving love to live, work, study, shop, socialise and worship, perhaps by seeing friends and families virtually, sending Christmas presents by courier, joining online Carol service, and more. This new way of living in Christ will transform a messy situation of pain and suffering to meet Love, for God is love. When there is love, there is God.

By God’s amazing grace, Jesus the Saviour of the world dwells in our midst so that we can turn to him. At that moment, he will reignite God’s way of love within our inner being. And so we reflect God’s love through all we are, and brings forth a Merry and blessed Christmas.

Let us ask for God’s help and pray:

Dear loving God, Jesus is the biggest gift ever to bring true joy and love to all humanity regardless of our circumstances. Whether it is our first time, or whether we have done it many times, may we open our minds and hearts to embrace Jesus this Christmas. May the

wisdom and the power of the Holy Spirit help us see and experience a transforming new life in and through Jesus Christ, the Lord and the Saviour of the world, Amen.

Wishing you and your loved ones a blessed and a very Merry Christmas!
Emmanuel,
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