



BELIEVERS EASTERN CHURCH

Synod Secretariat, Thiruvalla, Kerala, India.

SHEPHERD'S LETTER

December, 2017

✠Glory be to the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is a joy and privilege for me to write to you once again! I am constantly praying for you, and whenever I do, I thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for you because I have heard that you believe in Christ Jesus and because you are showing true Christian love towards others. *(adapted from Colossians chapter 1)*

In the letter I sent last month, I talked about the topic of the 'Church Calendar' and its importance in our lives and how it can assist our worship. As you would then realise, we are in the season of Advent, - the season that focuses on the first coming of Jesus and the events surrounding that.

In this month's letter, I would like to draw your attention to the greatest celebration of our lives - Christmas.

Once in a while I am sure you have all heard about unfortunate instances of people falling into water (like a lake, pond or river) and being sucked into a whirlpool. The water currents are so strong that, no matter how good the person is at swimming, they will be sucked in. The only hope for that person is for someone standing on the shore, to throw a rope into the water and pull him or her to safety.

Imagine the whirlpool as a picture of sin. All of us have been sucked into the whirlpool of sin from which we cannot rescue ourselves. The Bible says in Romans 3:23 that *'all men (irrespective of caste, colour, religion, race or creed) have sinned*

and have fallen short of the glory of God'. And the end result of sin is eternal death (separation from God) - Romans 6: 29.

God longs to rescue all men from eternal death. But someone had to pay the price for our sins and become a substitute for us. The only way for God to do that, was to become a man Himself and redeem us from our sins. Thus God sent his only son, Jesus, who took on my sin and your sin and the sin of the whole world, offering salvation to those who believed.

John 3:16 - For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son (Jesus), so that everyone who believes in Him should not be lost, but should have eternal life.

What is Christmas? It is the celebration where we remember God's only son, Jesus coming to the world - conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. So you see, Christmas is the greatest event to happen in history - ever! With the coming of Jesus into our world, history changed forever!

Praise God and because of that, we have hope of eternal life.

Now, the next question is - how should we celebrate Christmas?

We are all familiar with celebrations, like Holi, Diwali, Bihu, Onam or Pongal. All these celebrations give us an opportunity to remember and celebrate what they stand for. Among all these celebrations, Christmas is by far the most significant for us. It gives us an opportunity to remember Jesus coming to earth. At the same time as we celebrate we become a witness to those around us who do not yet know the Christmas story.

Some simple ways to celebrate Christmas are :

- **Christmas Stars** - We can make or buy stars and hang them in front of our houses. This star points to how the wise men who were searching for the Christ child were led to Him by the Star of Bethlehem that appeared in the East. Matthew 2:1,2 and 9-11.

- **Christmas Carols** - We can go to different houses in our neighbourhood singing Christmas carols/songs, thus spreading the joy of the season to all. We can also use that opportunity to offer a word of prayer for their household.
- Christmas is a season of **giving**, for **sharing our love** and **showing kindness** to those around. This can be done in many practical ways:
 - Giving food or clothes to those around us who are hungry or are in need of clothes.
 - Showing love and kindness - to older people, widows, orphans or those who are sick.
- **Church Services** - Please make sure that you and your family (including your children) attend all of our special services and prayers which are held in our churches during this season. You can also invite your friends, relatives and neighbours to attend these special services in our church.
- **Scripture Reading** - There are special Bible passages which are meant to be read during this season. Make sure we either read or have someone read to us the story of Jesus' coming and His life on earth.

My dear brothers and sisters, what an opportunity we have to show Jesus' love during this season of Christmas. I pray that we as members of the Believers Eastern Church, will be known as people who show love and kindness to all. I also pray that you would be kept sound in spirit, mind and body, blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful and will finish what he has started in you. *(adapted from 1 Thessalonians 5)*

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen☒

Dr. K.P. Yohannan
Metropolitan

Note: Instructions for those who read it.

- *Before reading it to your congregation, read this letter several times yourself, so that you become familiar with the letter and its contents.*
- *While reading to your congregation, make sure you read it slowly and carefully, so that everyone who's attending the church will be able to listen and understand.*