

*What's the*

## **ONE MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGE**

*For Christmas 2016?*

Christmas 2016 is dawning. It is the time of the year when people can get very busy with preparations, including shopping. According to a legend, this is the time when little children anticipate Santa Claus is coming to town. Parents who do their Christmas shopping should not forget one important thing in their shopping list – a large Christmas stocking in bright red colour, the bigger the better. It is not for the little children to keep their feet warm in winter, but for hanging by their bedside so that it can be well stuffed with Christmas goodies when St. Nicholas does come down the house chimney. If you do forget this important item on your shopping list, then your children may just miss out on their Christmas presents and blame you for it. ☹



The above is a secular Christmas story. It is up to you whether to impart it on your children, making them wish that indeed Santa Claus will be flying in with his team of eight reindeer pulling a sleigh with lots of presents for good boys and girls. No, he will not be flying in any of the modern aeroplanes. Perhaps when we were little children, some of us also heard the same story repeated year after year. Christmas might be a time of joy, but not everyone of us had parents who went so far as to put Christmas presents in stockings waiting for morning to give us a pleasant surprise. We don't have snow in Singapore, and our houses don't have chimneys for a roly-poly man in fine dressing to squeeze through. ☺ Even if we have the chimneys, pity Santa Claus having his red suit all blackened by soot if the story were to be believed!



According to the Bible, when Jesus was born, wise men from the East brought great gifts to the baby, and angels sang songs of praises to God. The birth of Jesus is a great event worthy of a grand celebration. Christmas is celebrated around the world not just by Christians. Even if non-Christians cele-

brate Christmas without getting the core message from the Bible, the exchanging of good wishes and the engaging of a pleasant time together speaks a season of cheerfulness and harmony.

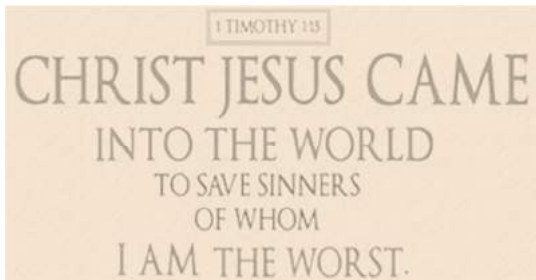
The Christmas carol “*I heard the bells on Christmas Day*” begins with lamentation over the strife-ridden state of the world where the Christmas carols of

*"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men."*



peace and good will are being drowned out by ill will and aggressions. Yet, despite the existence of hatred and violence, hope is not lost. It is good to accentuate the peace message of Christmas – Peace on earth and good will to men – against the noises of conflicts. The greater such oppositional noises are against peace and good will, the louder and deeper we ought to peal the Christmas bell for peace on earth and good will to men, as a carol rightly proclaims:

It is great to usher in the Christmas season with carols. When the voices ring out from hearts of thanksgiving, they sound so musically sweet and spiritually edifying even though the carollers may not be A-lister vocalists or chart-busting pop singers. To the carollers in particular, the most beautiful God-given gift of the Christmas season is their voices. Thank God for such lovely voices that share the Good News of Jesus Christ – the most precious gift of Christmas for all men, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)



***“Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.” – 1 Tim. 1:15***

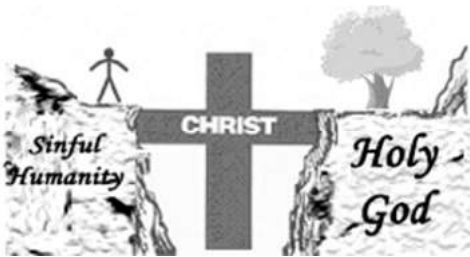
***“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save***

***the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” – John 3:17-18***

Every year, we repeat our celebration of the one and only Christmas, the one and only event of the birth of Jesus Christ. Each time we repeat the celebration, we repeat the reminder to everyone that:

*“Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.” – John 3:19-21*

What does this reminder mean to us personally as Christians who have claimed acceptance of Christ as our Lord and Saviour, and what does it mean to those who have yet to come to the knowledge of the saving grace of Christ? I believe that the answers are obvious.



Ever since our first human ancestor sinned, the depravity of man's fallen nature has built barriers between us and God; we have lost our way of peace and there is no justice in our paths. We have turned our paths into crooked roads. (Isa. 59:2, 8) Is there any wonder, therefore, that freedom

from strife is so elusive in the world today? As we ponder at the sins of the Publican in Isaiah 59, let us be slow to wag a finger at anyone but be quick to take cognizance of our own unworthiness.

Separated from God by our own rebellion, Christmas brings us Good News that, by God's amazing grace, Christ came into the world to bridge the chasm between us and God. Because of the depth of our sin, we are caught in a position that we cannot help ourselves. Since we as children have flesh and blood, Christ too shared in our humanity *“in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement of the sins of the people.”* (Heb. 2:17)

At the Advent of Christ, an angel said to the shepherds in the fields, “Do not be afraid. I bring you **good news that will cause great joy** for all the people. Today in the town of David a **Savior has been born** to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” – Luke 2:10-11



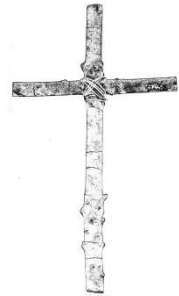
The joy of Christmas is definitely because of the Good News that a **Saviour has been born to us**. We can identify this unique reason for joy in the following carols:

- “Joy to the world, the Lord is come ...”
- “Oh, come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant ... Come and behold him, Born the king of angels ...”
- “Shepherds why this jubilee, Why your joyous strains prolong ... Come to Bethlehem and see, Christ the Lord, the new-born King.”

A long list of carols can be cited with joy as the common theme, and this joy is invariably linked with the Good News of a saviour being born. In other words, this joy is not a mere feeling of pleasure or the countenance of cheerfulness that people associate with contentment or satisfying circumstances. This is the Christmas joy of salvation that we can claim upon the mercy of God who accepts our reconciliation with Him not because we have our own merits for justification but for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who was born to make His all-atoning sacrifice on the Cross.

Christmas is a time for celebration of the joy we have in our Saviour King, and a time for joy that we can claim God’s appointed way for us to be redeemed from our sin.

Christmas is a time for all to focus on the **ONE MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGE**. What message is it? I shall leave this question for personal meditation by each and every one.



*John Lee*