



Christmas "Presence"

CHRISTMAS TIME AGAIN! But it doesn't feel like it – at least not for me. Certainly being in a new place away from familiar family can add to that feeling, but it's more than that. And I'm guessing many of you may feel the same.

I noticed that I am not hearing the familiar Christmas songs and music, but perhaps that is because my radio is tuned to hear reports of Covid-19 updates and the state of our elections. I am not feeling the same "togetherness" or "warmth" we feel at Christmas, probably because we have all had to make sacrifices in this unusual time that are keeping us "apart." In short, I find myself longing for and remembering Christmases of the past.

I wonder, what are your fondest memories of Christmas? Are they memories about threats to be on good behavior; to make a delightful time gathering with family and friends; rushing to buy the right thing; focusing on the things you gave or received; about all the wrappings and lights? **OR was and IS it still God's gift to us – His Son?**

That is the question we need to consider to get out of any "funk" we are in and to make Christmas a season of FAITH! It's not about Christmas PAST but Christmas PRESENT! It's not about our PRESENTS, given or received, but it's about Christ's PRESENCE that brings warmth and meaning and a feeling of connectedness this season!

Many people will approach Christmas this year totally exhausted, for many reasons, so much so that they miss the message. I wonder if memories this Christmas can be different as we pause to look again on how vast God's love is, that He would send His Son into this world. How deeply Jesus was committed to me and you and all of God's people so that we might have life and have it abundantly.

When the days are cold and it gets dark early and the lights come on is your mood set for MEDITATION, not just thinking, or just dreaming, or just remembering past delights, but meditating on the presence, power, and the promises of Jesus Christ?

I pray that, no matter what you are thinking or experiencing physically or emotionally, in these days leading up to Christmas, that you will find your **greatest delight in realizing what God has given to you – HIS PRESENCE!** I pray that the joy of His salvation will be so delightful to you that it will bubble over and overflow to many others.

In the coming weeks you will probably hear: **BLESSED CHRISTMAS! HAPPY CHRISTMAS! MERRY CHRISTMAS!** All of these are summed up and are possible ONLY in the promises of God and the blessed assurance that only He can give.

I pray that each of us will grow in grace and that our gracious God will take the center of our attention so that – instead of trying to recapture a mood or feeling – this year and every year you will find in your life the closeness to Christ becoming more real and the power of Christ becoming more vital and the love of Christ becoming more visible. That is Emmanuel. That is "God with us!" **I pray that your Christmas will truly be enriched by Christ's presence in your life.**

In Christ's service and yours,

Pastor Love

