



നവവത്സരാശംസകൾ

We are at the dawn of a new year. As we look back we may find reasons for joy, for sorrow, for hope and for dismay in the events of the past year. There is no reason to believe that 2013 is going to be any easier. But as children of God, we can go forward trusting in the assurance of our Lord that He is with us till the end of the world.



Pastor K.A. Mathew

ഏതു ജനതയ്ക്കും പുതുവർഷപുലരി പുളകമണിയിക്കുന്ന ഒന്നാണ്. പുത്തൻ പ്രതീക്ഷകൾ ഉദിച്ചുയരുന്ന അവസരം. പാശ്ചാത്യ സമൂഹങ്ങളിൽ അതൊരു ഉത്സവമേള തന്നെ. ബ്രിട്ടീഷ് ഭരണകാലത്ത് ഭാരതത്തിൽ ജനുവരി ഒന്ന് പൊതു ഒഴിവുദിവസമായിരുന്നുവെന്ന് പറഞ്ഞ് കേട്ടിട്ടുണ്ട്. ക്രൈസ്തവ പാരമ്പര്യമാണ് അതിനു പിന്നിലുള്ളതെന്ന് സാധാരണയായി കരുതുന്നുവെങ്കിലും അതു റോമൻ സംസ്കാര പാരമ്പര്യത്തിൽ നിന്നും വന്നിട്ടുള്ളതാണ്. ഹൈന്ദവർക്കും മ്യൂസ്ലിമുകൾക്കും മറ്റും വേറെ ദിവസങ്ങളാണുള്ളത്. കേരളീയരായ നമുക്ക് കൊല്ലവർഷം പ്രത്യേകമായുണ്ട്. പൊന്നിൻ ചിങ്ങമാസമാണ് കേരളീയരുടെ പുതുവർഷാരംഭം.

കഴിഞ്ഞ ഒരു വർഷം ഇത്രവേഗം നമ്മെ വിട്ടുപിരിഞ്ഞെന്നോർക്കുവാൻ പ്രയാസം. ഇന്നലെയെന്ന പോലെ തോന്നുന്നു കഴിഞ്ഞ പുതുവർഷം പിറന്നത്. പക്ഷേ 2012-ന് വേഗത കൂടുതലൊന്നും ഇല്ലായിരുന്നു. ഓരോ വിനാഴികകളായി, മണിക്കൂറുകളായി അത് നീങ്ങുകയായിരുന്നു. നമ്മുടെ അനുവാദം കാത്തു നിന്നില്ലെന്നു മാത്രം. ഒരു പക്ഷേ തിരിഞ്ഞുനോക്കുമ്പോൾ സന്തോഷിക്കാനുള്ളത്, കരയാനുള്ളത്, പ്രത്യാശിക്കാനുള്ളത്, നിരാശപ്പെടാനുള്ളത് ഒക്കെയുണ്ട് കടന്നുവന്ന ജീവിതപാതയിൽ. നാം ചെയ്യേണ്ട കർത്തവ്യങ്ങൾ പലത് ചെയ്യാതെ ബാക്കി കിടക്കുന്നു. മൂന്നിൽ വന്നുനിന്ന അനുഗൃഹീത സന്ദർഭങ്ങൾ

പലതും പിന്നിൽ മറഞ്ഞു കഴിഞ്ഞു. അവയൊന്നും ഇനി മടങ്ങിവരികയില്ല. നിത്യതയുടെ പുലരിയിൽ നാം മറുപടി പറയേണ്ട ചോദ്യങ്ങളായി അവശേഷിക്കുന്നു. ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ കണക്കുകൾ കർത്താവിനു സമർപ്പിക്കുമ്പോൾ നാം ചെയ്തതും ചെയ്യാത്തതുമൊക്കെ അവിടെ വെളിപ്പെടും.

പോയതുപോയി, പക്ഷേ, പോയദിവസങ്ങൾ നമ്മെ പഠിപ്പിച്ച പാഠങ്ങൾ, നാം ജീവിതത്തിൽ പ്രായോഗികമാക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. ഇന്നലത്തെ പരാജയങ്ങൾ നാളത്തെ ജീവിതത്തിലേക്കുള്ള വിജയപാതകളാണ്. അതുകൊണ്ട് ഒട്ടും നിരാശപ്പെടാതെ പുതുവർഷത്തിന്റെ പുതിയ നാളുകളിലേക്ക് നമുക്ക് പ്രവേശിക്കാം. ചുറ്റുപാടുകളിലേക്ക് നോക്കിയാൽ പ്രത്യാശിക്കുവാൻ വകയൊന്നുമില്ല. ലോകത്തെ നന്നാക്കാൻ രാഷ്ട്രീയ നേതാക്കൾ ചെയ്ത പരിശ്രമങ്ങൾ ഒക്കെ കുഴപ്പങ്ങൾ വർദ്ധിപ്പിച്ചിട്ടേയുള്ളൂ. ഒരു പ്രശ്നവും ആരും പരിഹരിച്ചിട്ടില്ല. എങ്കിലും ദൈവജനത്തിന് ഭയപ്പെടാനൊന്നുമില്ല. തീനും കുടിയുമായി പുതുവത്സരത്തെ സ്വീകരിക്കുവാൻ അധികം പേരും താൽപര്യം കാണിക്കുമ്പോൾ നമുക്ക് മരണത്തെ ജയിച്ച കർത്താവിനെ നോക്കി മുമ്പോട്ടുള്ള യാത്ര തുടരാം. അവിടുന്ന് ഇന്നലെയും ഇന്നും എന്നും അനന്യനാണ്. ലോകാവസാനത്തോളം കൂടെയുണ്ട്. ഇതാ ഞാൻ വേഗം വരുന്നു എന്നും അവിടുന്ന് അരുളിച്ചെയ്യുന്നു. അങ്ങനെ ശുഭപ്രതീക്ഷയോടെ പുതുവത്സരത്തിൽ കർത്തവ്യങ്ങളെ കർത്താവിനായി നിറവേറ്റാം.



The year 2012 has witnessed events that draw the special attention of all biblical students. Mankind is changing and transforming in new directions. We hear of man's achievements and success stories in science and technology. At the same time, failures and unaccomplished goals echo in our minds. Things such as political unrest, leadership changes in nations, religious awakenings and extremism and social changes that lead to liberalism, secularism and materialism as the motto are seen all around.

Moral decline

"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying, and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark" (Luke 17:26-30)

"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24:37-39)

We live in a world that is declining in its morals. Secular morality and social behaviors have become an accepted fashion, even in the Christian church. Because of this, the increase of sin in the secular world has made its way into the Christian church, and we have begun to see the growth of sinful behaviors such as: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, discord, hatred, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, lust, evil desires, malice, filthy language, slander, etc. It's a sad truth that these things are all seen even in the Christian community. The Bible has clearly said that a sign of Christ's second coming would be people eating, drinking, and enjoying themselves. Everywhere we turn, we see people gathering together for parties and celebrations that lack the presence of God. Moral decline has increased to its highest level yet. In America's Presidential election, the nation selected a democratic president to lead the country who promotes secularism and many non-Christian

values. An openly declared lesbian has been elected to the American Senate. Marijuana has been legalized and permitted to be sold in the open market. More states have accepted civil unions or alternative life-styles instead of marriage as the accepted pattern of life-style. The Holy Spirit had warned us that moral decline would happen before the coming of the Lord.

Increase of Life problems

"Before that time there were no wages for man or beast. No one could go about his business safely because of his enemy, for I had turned every man against his neighbor" (Zachariah 8:10)

"Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap" (Luke 21:34)

"Death has climbed in through our windows and has entered our fortresses; it has cut off the children from the streets and the young men from the public squares" (Jeremiah 9:21,22)

Life problems seem to have increased now more than ever. Social issues and problems are becoming unresolved concerns for national leaders. This seems to be an issue throughout the world that does not appear to be ending anytime soon, according to major news media. It is a sign of what is going to happen in the near future – that before the coming of the Lord, life problems will rise to a level in which the human mind will not be able to comprehend or deal with. The young and old are all getting involved in sinful ways and behaviors in a way that cannot be matched to any other time in history.

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Jesus said,
"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man".
Here is the first part of the 2-part series in which the various signs pointing clearly to the coming of our Lord are discussed.

Political unrest

"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come" (Matthew 24:6,7)

There is tension in the Middle East. There is turmoil in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt and many other areas of the world. There is unrest in the Korean peninsula, problems in many African nations

There are reports of war going on all over the world. There is tension in the Middle East. There is turmoil in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt and many other areas of the world. China and Russia are in the highest level yet regarding the armed race. There is unrest in the Korean peninsula, problems in many African nations

such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Sudan, and other nations that are experiencing political unrest. More weapons are being added to the war warehouse. Nations want to test their weapons and show their muscle power. Israel is at a constant attack from Palestine and others. At any time, a major war can break out. As the Bible says, *"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but such things must happen"*.

Natural calamities

The hurricane, "Sandy" struck New York as well as nine other states. It ended in total devastation throughout these states, especially in the areas surrounding New York. It resulted in many deaths and the loss of many homes. There was a total breakdown of heat and electricity, loss of property, and fallen trees everywhere. It gives us the firsthand experience into the limitations of human ability and technology.



Hurricane

Increase in violence

Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut experienced one of the most vicious acts of violence to occur in this country. Twenty

little children and seven adults have lost their precious lives. A 20-year old young man committed the crime. The entire nation is shaken and saddened by this violence. The nation is

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struggling to find the reason for all of this. Some blame mental health issues, and some blame gun control. We know one fact – there are violent video games, lyrics and movies, and violence in families. These are all promoters of violence in society. As Governor Mike Huckabee stated, the lack of religious teaching and values in the schools can also be a promoter of violence.

Violence all over the world has been increasing every day. Our kids' schools and colleges are no longer a safe ground. The deadly shooting rampage in April of 2007 on the campus of Virginia Tech University killed 32 people. The Columbine High School shooting tragedy that killed so many high school students has not left our memories. Also, the event that took place in Northwest University in Illinois was another violent tragedy. Schools and college campuses have turned into a place of blood battles. Streets and markets are no longer safe places. Violence has increased in various countries in Africa. Everyday, blood shedding takes place in Iraq and the Middle East, with no exceptions for Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Man is not able to control violence with his own ability. The one who is able to bring peace is going to come, and He is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Increase of knowledge

"But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge" (Daniel 12:4)



We see the increase of wisdom now more than ever. The education system has altered and changed, and the computer has revolutionized the world with the empowering ability of increasing knowledge. The thinking and planning ability of man has gone to higher levels. Man is boasting of their knowledge and ability to handle situations. We must remember, however, that although knowledge is increasing, issues are still arising. Man is still man. There is a God on the throne who is preparing to send His Son to this earth. God is the one who has the final knowledge. ■

- To be continued in the next issue

Education with Character

All of us are deeply interested in sending our children to the best educational institution available. In these days of competition and unemployment, it is important to watch the grades the children make for each subject. We want them to score the highest marks at the entrance test to various professional courses.

It seems teaching our children "how to make a living" has become the primary objective of education. Our desire surely is their academic achievement that will make them fit for a secure future. But, in the pursuit of such achievements, we forget the matter of teaching our children "how to live."

While we are concentrating our efforts on their academic achievements and professional skills, some people are likely to ignore character formation. In a way, achievement is "what we have done," and character is "what we are." It therefore, becomes important to consider answers to questions like, "Why is my child successful?; by what character is he/she excelling?" Not everyone has the same opportunities for achievement. But if such an opportunity comes, they won't be ready for it unless their character is already in place.

Modern man may think that, after all, money can buy anything. Many are tempted to follow the path of acquiring knowledge that helps in making more money assuming that possession of wealth can bring happiness. We know money can buy a bed, but not sleep. Money can buy a 'house,' but not a 'home.' House means buildings, but home means people. When things become more important than people, home ceases to be a home.

Some parents manipulate their children's future by putting so much pressure in the selection of their career in life. Parents, it seems, are prepared to spend money to give the best education that will serve their interest rather than that of their children. There is nothing wrong in selecting a course that will give our children financial security. But as we impart knowledge to the coming generation, it is important that they

should be taught values that will guide their lives. Teaching values will help them sharpen their capacity to make decisions in life, and to give them guidance for the use of the knowledge gained.

Character - the causative force for achievement

It is the character that provides the causative force that brings about continued achievements. Character lays a foundation for long-term reward. Character is to be exalted and emphasized above achievement. Holding high positions with unwholesome character will eventually reflect on the person. Character formation in a child should take place from the very beginning itself. True, we need to guide children towards economic security; but by the time we discover their faults it may be too late.

We need to realize that success and popularity are only of secondary importance. Reputation can be obtained by presenting a false image. Character lives in a person. If it

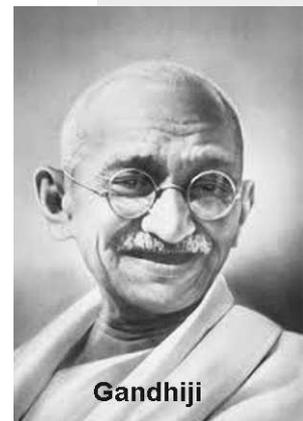
is character that we revere, we will be motivated to think of making education value based. On the other hand, if it is money and power that we revere, the opportunities for profit and impressing others will get us excited.

Our educational system has to be modified to give ample thrust on character development. The results of certain studies report that only 15 percent of what we acquire by way of professional skills enables us to succeed in life, but 85 percent contribution is from the personal quality of the individual. That is, 85 percent is individual goodness. Unfortunately our education focuses solely on the 15 percent text knowledge. Good character lays the basis for producing healthy permanent results. The deciding factor for an individual's education is not the number of degrees



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Gandhiji

*"Education without character
is useless and dangerous"*
Gandhiji

Our knowledge and capabilities are surely unparalleled compared to any other times. But it is disheartening to note that our conduct and behaviour are not catching up with the knowledge.



'Now the thieves are stealing only the nuts and bolts, but if they are given more knowledge by education, they will learn to steal the entire rails!' How true is the statement: "knowledge without character is useless and dangerous."

attached to the name but the quality of character.

In order to guide our children's behaviour and put meaning into their existence, they need good foundation or beliefs upon which they can act. Good values surely will make a person more human. Due to lack of such foundation, the inclinations of their heart may be toward negativism or toward bad values which make them inhuman. Also they need to be exposed to good values around which their desires and ambitions can be organized. As each individual is likely to function within his own value system, people are even identified by the values kept by them. So the identity clarification of an engineer, doctor, or of any professional is based on the value frame work within which he acts.

Character to catch up with knowledge

With the development of modern science, we have come a long way up in using various means of modern technology in our day-to-day life. But it is sad that our character is not catching up with the technology. Our knowledge on new means and methods may be on the increase, but our behaviour and attitude towards our fellow men are far behind. Our knowledge and capabilities are surely unparalleled compared to any other times. But it is disheartening to note that our conduct and

behaviour are not catching up with the knowledge. The tendency is more to use the knowledge for evil than for good even though some of them do it out of ignorance and are unaware of the consequences.

A story was heard about certain people stealing the nuts and bolts that are used to fix the rail tracks. Some anti-social elements and greedy people started removing those nuts and bolts to sell it as scrap iron. Some said they did it because they were uneducated, and thus emphasized the importance of adult education. But some commented: 'now the thieves are stealing only the nuts and bolts, but if they are given more knowledge by education, they will learn to steal the entire rails!' How true is the statement "knowledge without character is useless and dangerous."

Moreover we realize now that the indiscriminate use of science and technology will only destroy the life sustaining capacity of the planet. So it is highly important to give quality education to prevent greedy exploitation of nature causing deterioration of its life sustaining capacity. Values are to be imparted to maintain the fruitfulness of the earth and for the careful use of

non-renewable resources providing a healthy balanced environment.

Value based choices

Values come into play when decisions are called for. Decisions need to be value-laden. When certain things happen to us, sometimes we may not know well enough the cause or the reason of such events. But it is our choice as to how we go through it. We can face such situations and make choices on the basis of the values imparted to us. Children need to be equipped to order choices between possible alternatives in healthy direction. It is inevitable to teach values that will enable them to sort out the "tonic" potentiality from the "toxic" as these two are often intermingled.

Our lived values are expressed through our decisions and choices in life. First, we make decisions; then those decisions will make us to be the kind of people we are going to be. Moreover, our lived-values become a habit and it will have much influence in our lives. It is important to sharpen the capacity of our children to make moral choices by value education.

Programme for value education

We cannot leave the children the way they want to go. We have a responsibility to train them up in the way they should go. Programme of value education should have multiple dimensions such as values of citizenship, values of justice and peace in the society, and values for preserving the environment. Schools can impart personal values, social values, and environmental values.

Government can promote values which are enshrined in the Constitution such as justice, liberty, democracy, secularism, religious harmony, welfare of the weaker sections and the like. Religious groups can impart moral and spiritual values, especially in providing the inner strength to use

justified means to achieve justified ends, to love, show compassion, tolerance, non-violence, hope, faith and accountability.

Educators believe that values are caught by the children rather than taught in a separate class room situation. They catch values from parents and teachers. In fact they acquire values as they see the values being expressed by their parents, elders and teachers. The greatness of a teacher's character should be reflected in his/her everyday life. The silent unconscious influence of the life of a teacher has great impact. Children look for models rather than critics. If by our life example we can reach out to the children, its power brings long-term positive results to them. ■

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Have a different Perspective of Life

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

Job was an extremely wealthy and influential man who lived in the land of Uz that was located in northern Arabia. At a time when one's wealth is assessed by livestock, Job's enormous wealth and position is described in Job 1:3: "Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East" (Job 1:3). Job's patriarchal family-klan and the offering of sacrifice by Job as the head of the family (rather than a priest) indicate that Job lived during a time period before the Exodus of the Israelites. It is probable that Job was a contemporary of Abraham.

However, more significantly Job is described as "blameless and upright" and as "one who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1). He was a good father of his ten children, and loved them enough to pray and intercede daily for them (Job 1:5). It was when calamity struck Job head-on due to no fault of his life that we are able to understand that Job had an entirely different perspective of life.

When Job lost all his ten children and his entire livestock all within a matter of hours, we can see how Job reacted to this tragedy: Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. (Job 1:20-22) Job was aware of three important aspects of his life:

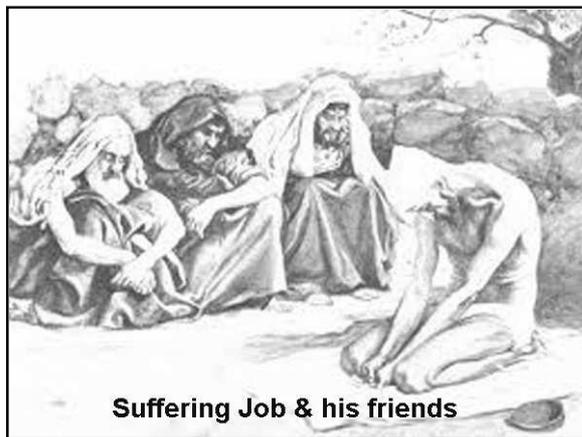
1. He came into this world carrying nothing and he will leave this world carrying nothing.

2. Everything that he had was a gift of God from His bounty. "Blessed be the name of God".

3. The God who has gifted him can also take it back as well. "Blessed be the name of God".

After this, the intensity of Job's problems increased when God allowed Satan to inflict Job with painful boils (Job 2:7). This was when Job's wife instead of being a 'helper' to him (Gen. 2:20) suggested that he should 'curse God and die':

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (Job 2:9-10). Here again Job's perspective towards life is reflected – he was willing to accept



Suffering Job & his friends

both good and bad from God with complaining or rebelling.

Job was willing to accept adversity that came to his life along with the good things that he had enjoyed earlier from God (compare Job 1: 10 with Job 2:10). The Apostle Paul also learned to rejoice both in plenty and in want (Phil. 4:10-13). Let us have a different perspective in life – like that of Job and Apostle Paul. Let us know that God is working everything good in our lives – whether good or bad.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28)



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The Apostle Paul also learned to rejoice both in plenty and in want (Phil. 4:10-13). Let us have a different perspective in life – like that of Job and Apostle Paul.

"Sons of God"

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed up on us that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1)

The love of God is the greatest subject in the world - no other greater subject in all the world. Because God loves us, it means He is not distant, not far off in outer space, unreachable and unconnected with the world. God has bestowed us His love and we became the sons of God.

God is love - it means that He is bound to show us His love and act for us. It means that God cares and looks after us. God will help us through all the trials and temptations of life. God will save us from sin, evil corruption and death of this world. God will provide a way for us to be delivered from the coming judgement. If God loves us and demonstrated His love to us, then He will expect us to respond. He will expect us to love Him - to be loved in return. God loves us but we have to receive His love in order to experience it. We have to enter into a loving relationship with God in order to know the love of God. If we do not love God then we can never know or experience God's love for us. His love will never touch us. If we truly love God, we have to walk with God throughout our life. Many people do not love God and they walk throughout their life without knowing God's love. They have to face all the trials and temptations, sufferings and sorrows of life and even death alone. They have no help except what man can give. They have rejected the love and help of God. They have no hope beyond this life. But thanks be to God, He loves the world, He loves all of us. Therefore anyone who wants to know God's love and care can do so. All we have to do is respond to this love, open up our lives and receive this love and love Him in return.

We have the privilege of God's love and we are called children of God. We have the great hope of God's love and eternal transformation (1 John 3:1-3). How wonderful it to be called the children of God who is the supreme majesty of the universe, the supreme power that created all things. It is the love of God



Pastor C.V.Samuel

that has bestowed the privilege of adoption upon us. No one becomes a child of God because of any merit or work of his own. Man has rebelled against God. Man has chosen to go his own way in life and to do his own thing. He does not want the restraints of God upon his life. He prefers to have his own way through life. Thus man has rebelled against God - ignored, neglected, disobeyed, disbelieved, rejected and denied God. But it is this fact that makes

We, believers, are children of God. The world does not know nor understand believers. The believers are ridiculed, marked, ignored, opposed, abused, rejected and persecuted by the world.

the love of God so amazing. It was while we were rebelling against God and opposing Him, while we were sinners and enemies of God, while we were standing against God, while we were in wrath and enmity with God, while we wanted little if anything to do with God - that God bestowed His love upon us (Rom. 5: 6,8-10).

God's love is manifested in the giving of His Son, Jesus Christ to the world - to die for us, for our sins. It is the death of Jesus Christ that makes it possible for us to become children of God. How? When Jesus Christ took our sins upon Himself our sins were removed from us. He died and paid the penalty for our sins. As the penalty was removed from us, God is able to receive us as righteous men and women, free of sin. Therefore God is able to accept us into His family - the family of God. God is able to adopt us

into His family as children of God (Gal. 4:4-6, 1 John 1:12, Rom. 8:15, 2 Cor. 6:17)

We, believers, are children of God. The world does not know nor understand believers. The believers are ridiculed, marked, ignored, opposed, abused, rejected and persecuted by the world. The persecution many come at work at school, at college, in the neighborhood or anywhere else. The world just does not understand why believers act and live the way they do. The world does not understand why believers separate themselves from the pleasures and the things of the world. Why do they deny themselves and live sacrificially? So that they can carry the message of Christ to the world. The world does not understand why believers go to church so much and like so much about Christ. The world does not understand believers because the world did not understand Jesus Christ also. Think about it - God's very own Son come into the world but the world did not know Him. They wanted nothing to do with Him. They rejected Him Now if the world rejected Jesus Christ, God's very own Son, they are bound to reject God's adopted

children, too. The world is just unwilling to recognize and acknowledge that God is righteous and pure and just. They are unwilling to give sacrificially to carry the gospel around the world and to meet the needs of the world. They do not understand the nature of believers that they are the children of God. They can live no other life than that of following God. Why? Because the believers know God in all of His love and the majesty of His being. This the world cannot understand. (Ref: Mat. 10:17, 24:9, John 15:20, Phil. 1.29).

It is our privilege of God's love that we are called children of God .He bestowed upon us this amazing love. The world does not know nor understand this. The great hope and mystery of God's love is eternal transformation. What we shall be is unknown, but we shall be like Christ. ■

The persistence of Jacob

"I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Gen 32:26)

These are Jacob's words during a wrestling event between him and a man. I like the persistence of Jacob that we see here and it has inspired me. Jacob here is very concerned about meeting his brother Esau the next day and now he is alone by himself. He had sent away his wives, handmaidens and sons ahead across the river.

Lets consider how he reached here this night and what encouraged him to take this fight. During his young days, Jacob was an unskilled man (unlike his brother Esau, who was a very clever hunter). And his father, Isaac liked Esau more than Jacob. Esau got all preferences and was the obvious choice as the heir after Isaac. Jacob was, of course, no match for Esau in any manner.

Have we faced similar competition from better qualified people and what would you do to win?

Jacob used worldly means and trickery to receive all the blessings from his father: a) He got the birthright from his twin older brother Esau by taking advantage of his hunger and b) he deceived his father, Isaac, into giving him Esau's blessings. Isaac made Jacob lord over Esau and over all his wealth (Gen 27: 37). But the paradox was that he could not receive or enjoy these blessings --- and he had to flee from the situation even to survive.

Then the second part of his life began at Padan-aram with Laban and his family, where Laban was his master. He had in his possession, his father's blessings and God's promises that he received at Bethel. *"I will be with you and will keep you in all the places you go" (Gen 28:15).*

How would we win in our area of work and what would we do to get rewarded, being well aware that God's promise are with us?



Johnson Thomas
New York

Here he got his blessings and reward through hard work and relationship: so he seems to have changed now. He got his wife as wages for his hard work! But the paradox was that he was tricked by his master Laban - instead of Rachel he got Leah. Unlike his previous history, here he was honest and hard working but the result was unexpected, he was deceived!

But lets not forget the blessings he received from his father Isaac and God's promise at Bethel. Through Jacob, Laban was blessed and his flocks increased (Gen 30:27). Laban appreciated all the efforts of Jacob and the blessedness that Jacob had and offered to compensate him. Finally Jacob was going to claim his reward, position, his blessings. But you know what happened? His master, Laban, tricked him again.

Have you been tricked by your employer / master by not sharing the blessings that he received through your efforts? What would you do?

Jacob decided to go solo! He used his tricks and raised cattle, he became very prosperous, but with all his prosperity he had to flee from Laban for his life! Finally, he was going back to his

brother Esau and he was going to face his fears in life because he realized that the only way to succeed and receive his blessings was by claiming it.

That night a man comes to wrestle Jacob. He is alone here - his sons, wives, maids are all away. If somebody wrestles with you, it is not for fun, right? Wrestling today is a sport but in those days it was a fight, just without weapons. That night he is all alone with nothing. Whatever he earned through deceit, hard work, love, honesty, nothing remained with him. As he was looking uncertainly for the next day, there was this man who had come to attack him in the night.

You know what Jacob did, Jacob did not give up. *"Seeing that he could not prevail, he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh and it was out of joint, and he wrestled with him" (Gen 32:25).* He continued to fight till the dawn when this stranger requested to let him go. *"I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Gen 32:26).*

"And Jacob called the place Peniel which means 'face of God', for I have seen God face to face" (Gen 32:30).

This wrestler was not an ordinary man, but from heaven. And to prevail against him with a thigh out of joint, imagine how desperate Jacob must have been to win! Jacob perhaps realized that all his worldly blessings would come and go, probably most of them he could not even enjoy and could be stolen. But only if God blessed, he could live to see and enjoy his blessings. That morning he received a new name, he became a new nation, Israel.

My friends, let us not give up, situations may break us but we have the example of Jacob. We will not give up against trials and tests and we will prevail

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and enjoy all features available on the site!**

Children's

CORNER



"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them"

A mother wanted to encourage her little son's progress at the piano and so bought tickets for a piano concert. When they entered the hall, the mother spotted a friend in the audience and walked down the aisle to greet her. Her son seized this opportunity to explore the wonders of the concert hall and made his way through a door marked "NO ADMITTANCE."

Before long, the curtains opened and spotlights focused on to a little boy on the stage. The mother stood in amazement as she saw her little boy sitting at the keyboard and innocently

DON'T QUIT !

playing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."

At that moment, the piano master made his entrance, and moved to the piano, and whispered in the boy's ear, "Don't quit. Keep playing." Then he leaned and reached down his hand and began filling in the tune along with the little boy and soon audience

Together, the piano master and the little boy transformed a frightening situation into a beautiful event.



That's the way it is with God. What we can accomplish on our own is hardly noteworthy. We try our best, but the results aren't exactly graceful flowing music. But with the hand of the Master, our life's work truly can be beautiful.

Bible says in Isaiah 41:13, "For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not fear; I will help you".



Jubey Varghese



Tejas Vinayak Gangurde
Mumbai

God feeds Elijah

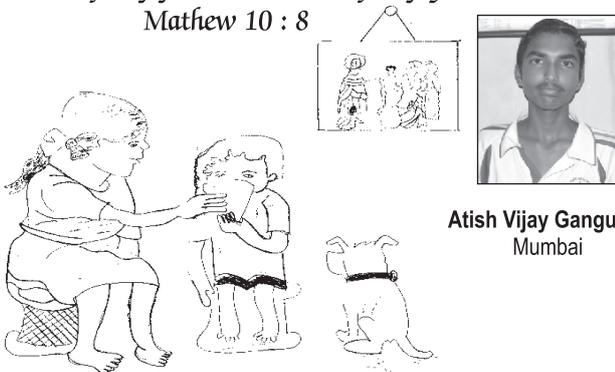


In a Classroom

By J.V. Arts

Jesus said freely you have received freely give

Mathew 10 : 8



Atish Vijay Gangurde
Mumbai



Jesus Blessing Children



Joel K. Sajeev
Mumbai

POEM

Look unto Jesus!



Mary Mathew

IPC Kanjurmarg
Mumbai

Look unto Jesus,
He will lead us into His light.
*Let our light burn in front of other people,
He will enable us to brighten our surroundings.*
Listen to the voice of Jesus,
He will teach us magnificent things.
*Learn from His word,
He will enrich us every day.*
Let Jesus abide in us,
He will abide in us forever.
*Love Jesus and keep His commands,
He will give us His spirit.*
Leave our troubles with the Lord,
He will surely defend us.
*Lean on our Lord every time,
He will ask angels to care for us.*
Let us learn from His decrees,
He will fulfill His wish through us.
*Lift up our holy hands to Him,
He will carry us through.*
Labour with His grace in the field of Jesus,
He will help us in reaping a good harvest.
*Lord wants to take my boat away from this world,
He wishes to take me to His home.*
Lessons of life which my God allows for me,
He wants me not to lose my hope.
*Leave this world for a glorious life with God,
He will fulfill our desire to be with Him forever.*
Hallelujah!

PRAYER

Prayer is an urgent request to a person who is of a higher status than the praying person. It can be also termed as an application to a higher authority. But a needy person's cries, tears and supplication to the most high, Almighty God, are the true prayers which will be answered by Him. When one prays, it is very essential to be absolutely crystal clean and clear in heart. The heart must be concentrated on Almighty God. Ask the Lord for all our needs, especially peace, joy, faith, hope, love and care. God will bless those who will call upon Him. Let us pray that we never become prey of the devil. When we pray, Lord God will shower His blessings like a spray!

**- Ranni Achayan,
Kerala**

IPC Sunday School Association Website

The website of IPC Sunday School Association, Maharashtra State was inaugurated on Nov. 18, 2012 by IPC General President Rev. K.C. John, during the combined worship service of IPC Maharashtra State, held at Jyotiba Mangal Karyalay, Kalewadi, Pune.

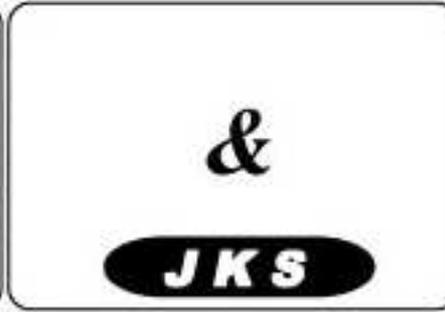
This is the first of its kind in India, which is exclusively designed for the Sunday School children. In the Inaugural address, Rev. K.C. John emphasized the need of such media in the present technically advanced society to attract the young generation, who are very much familiar with the internet media and congratulated the Sunday School Association of IPC Maharashtra State for developing such an interactive site for the spiritual growth of our children.

Pastor P. Joy, President, IPC Maharashtra State chaired the function and Br. Mathews Paul, Director of Sunday School Association, introduced the site and explained the various compartments of the site. There are many sections in the site where the students can exhibit and contribute their talents.

This can be considered as a milestone in the history of IPC Sunday School Association.

Website address: www.sundayschool.in





The Lord's Prayer gives anguish to a Canadian!

Peter Ferguson, a nonbeliever from Ontario, is suing his local government to stop the recitation of the Lord's Prayer before council meetings. He claims the practice causes him "anguish, discrimination, exclusion, rejection and loss of enjoyment of life", according to reports. He says the prayer breaches his constitutional rights and also seeks \$5,000 in damages. He adds that he has been trying for over a year to persuade his local government to stop turning council meetings into a "Christian zone". A spokesman of the council said they hoped to avoid a legal battle and unnecessary cost to the taxpayer.

In a parallel situation, the Council of a Colorado City has decided to begin its meetings with a moment of silence instead of a prayer after a complaint from the Freedom of Religion Foundation, who sent a letter to council members arguing the opening prayer was unconstitutional. Council members said they believed a moment of silence would satisfy all sides. A resident of the city said: "I actually find it to be more fair because it gives people who want to pray the option to do so but those who don't want to no longer have to". Another resident said: "I'm really sad that they made that decision because for those of us who believe in God and the power of prayer I think prayer is very important".



Jesus wondered: "when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8 NIV). Prayer is an act of acknowledging God's provision, protection and guidance in a human being's life. Refusing to pray is a display of arrogance. And Bible says, pride goes before the fall!

Marriage Certificates will not have the words 'Bride' and 'Groom'!

As same-sex marriage law takes effect in the state of Washington in USA, a spokesman for the Washington health department told Fox News that officials are preparing to remove the terms, "bride" and "groom" along with "husband" and "wife" from marriage and divorce certificates. The words will be replaced by gender-neutral terms, like "Spouse A" and "Spouse B" or "Person A" and "Person B". The spokesman added: "We want our forms to work for everyone who is getting married".

Symbolically, they are doing away with the whole concept of bride and groom, husband and wife. There is feverish attack on the institution of marriage which was established by Almighty God in the Garden of Eden. Satan who began his cunning encroachment into the lives of human beings in the Garden of Eden continues to do so even now to defeat the purposes of God!

A Hindu Elected to U.S. Congress

According to a report in the Christian News Network, Tulsi Gabbard, 31, a Democrat, won her bid for election from Hawaii and will be representing Hawaii's second district in U.S. Congress beginning in January. She is slated to take oath on the Bhagavad Gita which is one of her favorite Hindu texts, instead of the Bible. She hopes her presence in

Congress would cause others to understand and embrace Hinduism in America.

How great it would have been if the Christian Congressmen decided to exhibit Christian characteristics in their behavior!

No 'Christmas trees', only "holiday trees"!

Student members of a community college club wanted to promote a Christmas tree sale to raise money for an organization that provides Christmas presents to prisoners' children. Club members submitted forms to the college to promote the sale, with the proposed text reading, "The Society will be selling Christmas trees..." But when the announcement appeared on the college's website, every reference to "Christmas trees" had been replaced with "holiday trees". The club has threatened to go to court.

On the other hand, a new national



survey has revealed that most Americans still prefer signs in stores that say "Merry Christmas" rather than ones with "Happy Holidays". In a survey of 1,000 adults

nationwide, it has been estimated that 68 percent of American adults prefer "Merry Christmas" while just 23 percent like "Happy Holidays" instead.

Christmas has its own sense of gladness and can never be dismissed from man's thinking processes. It was angels who proclaimed "joy to the world" at the first Christmas! That was the message from heaven and it will continue to ring out in the world whenever the gospel is preached. It is the only message of happiness available to man!

Atheists and Presidential oath

An atheist group wants President Obama to take the oath of office on January 21, 2013 without a Bible and



President Obama taking oath on Bible in 2009

without mentioning God, according to reports, They suggest that the President places his hand on the Constitution

instead of a Bible. They argue that the words "so help me God" are not prescribed by the Constitution. They want him to do something that no president in recent memory has done and thus reach out to secular Americans!

Let us see whether the President follows this unsolicited advice!!

Appointment of women as Bishops delayed!

According to reports, the House of Laity of the Church of England couldn't garner a two-thirds majority in favor of women bishops. The church's General Synod has a three-tiered structure - bishops, clergy and laity. The bishops and clergy have already approved the appointment of women Bishops. The consequence of the 'no' vote of the laity means that it will not be possible to introduce another draft legislation in the same terms until a new General Synod comes into being in 2015.

A case of the laity being more sensible than the clergy?

Pakistani preacher jailed for sermon at funeral

According to reports, an evangelist was accused of defaming Islam when he told mourners at a funeral about the sacrifice of Christ when Muslims present took offense. It was the funeral of a

Christian where most of those present were church members. The preacher's son said: "My father addressed the gathering at the bereaved family's house by sharing Jesus Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. He did not know that there were some Muslims sitting among the mourners". After the arrest, his family has moved away from the area for fear of violence.

Let us hope the preacher will get some relief when the case comes up in court.

Churchgoing students go further in school

Sociologists have found that religiously affiliated youth are 40 percent more likely to graduate high school than their unaffiliated peers and 70 percent more likely to enroll in college. The researchers noted that the students' fellow churchgoers are an important factor, serving as mentors who help them set their sights high.

Although the study has been conducted in USA from data from more than 8,379 students from across the country, the conclusions are, quite likely, applicable in all countries. Bible says the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and a God fearing student will certainly do well in his studies, too.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE ... Continued

** The Bible was written by the Holy Spirit through 40 men over a period of about 1600 years dating from 1500 BC to about 100 years after Christ.

** The Bible is the Book of Salvation and Jesus Christ is the Only Saviour under Heaven given among the human beings.

** The system of chapters was introduced in A.D. 1227 by Cardinal Hugo de S. Caro, while the verse notations were added in 1551 by Robertus Stephanus, after the advent of printing. The first translation of the English Bible was initiated by John Wycliffe and completed by John Purvey in 1380.

** A Bible in the University of Gottingen is written on 2,470 palm leaves.

** The Bible devotes some 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but over 2000 verses on money and possessions.

** The Bible can be read aloud in 70 hours.

** In King James Version of the Bible, Ezra 7:21 contains all but the letter 'j'; Joshua 7:24, 1 Kings 1:9, 1 Chronicles 12:40, 2 Chronicles 36:10, Ezekiel 28:13, Daniel 4:37, and Haggai 1:1 contain all but the letter 'q'; 2 Kings 16:15 and 1 Chronicles 4:10 contain all but the letter 'z'; and Galatians 1:14 contains all but the letter 'k'.

** Gabriel, Michael, and Lucifer are the three angels mentioned by name in the Bible.

- Contributed: C.C. Abraham