

How Shall We Celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas?

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(Cir. 1880) First part missing. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6:17, 18.

There is something to come out from. You cannot mix or mingle with the world and at the same time be united with Jesus Christ. "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." James 4:4. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord." John 15:18-20.

Here every specification is given us to show us that we must come out from the world, and how we must come out and be separate from the world, brethren and sisters, and let our influence be wholly on the Lord's side. I feel that this is of eternal importance. Satan besets the pathway of every one of us. If he can get you to love yourselves, to indulge inclination, to compromise your faith, then you are his servants. You cannot afford this. You do not want your names enrolled as those enlisted in his army.

Thanksgiving Day will be respected, but how is it used? This day's privileges are turned out of their proper course and it is made a day of feasting and gluttony. Is it a day to set your tables with luxuries and load them down with sweetmeats and condiments for you and yours? Christ said, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Luke 14:13, 14. Now, you may not be at a loss to number how many Thanksgivings are kept according to this rule.

If you should bring an offering to God upon that day, do you not believe that God would be as well pleased as any one of your earthly friends would be with a present from you? Stop and think of this, and see if you cannot discern your duty and say, I will bring to God a thanksgiving gift for all the blessings He is bestowing upon me, for the rain in its season, for the sun that makes the seed to vegetate, for the laden boughs, and for the fruits of the harvest.

This may be the last Thanksgiving you may ever have in which to make a thank offering to God. Instead of gorging yourselves with the good things of this life, let us come to God and give Him, upon that day, a gift in gratitude for His loving-kindness, and so have a genuine thanksgiving day for God. Let there be no murmurings, no unpleasant feelings, no unholy thoughts, but turn your attention to God.

And Christmas will soon be here. It is supposed that Christ was born on the 25th day of December, and for that reason it is celebrated as His birthday. But it is impossible for us to know upon what day He was born. You can know no more about that than the children of Israel could know where Moses was buried. The reason God has not revealed that fact is because you would have worshiped that day, as they would have worshiped the grave of Moses had they found it, and this is just what they have done with the day they supposed was the one on which Christ was born.

Everybody is trying to find out how they can bring suitable gifts to one another. In the family the study is to know what next they can give. They have given something every year. Now what shall I give this year to the children, or to father and mother? But where are the Saviour's poor? They are right before your doors.

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And He will say unto them on His left hand, "I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me." Matt. 25:42-45.

Now, why is this so? It is because there is so much selfishness. Jesus Christ identified Himself with His suffering poor, and when we do the works of benevolence we are doing it unto Christ. I want to know how many of us are doing this kind of work. How many will keep Christmas aright? The wealthy bring gifts to their friends but they are rich still. Then how can this be a sacrifice to them? Then what shall we do to please God? I will tell you. If you would keep this day as you should, you would call upon the needy poor, and if they are in want of anything, supply that want.

And when this is done, come and render an offering unto the Lord. It says to your own soul, Christ for my sake became poor that through His poverty I might be made rich. Jesus, by the offering of Himself, has brought this infinite Gift within our reach. You may bring a gift to Jesus that through your offerings others may go out in the vineyard and work to bring to God those for whom Jesus died.

This responsibility rests upon each of us, that we regard Christ as first and last and best in everything. The best offering we can make to God after we give ourselves is our property. Jesus gave Himself without reserve for us. I am so grateful that we have such a precious example in the Bible.

When Jesus was born, and Joseph and Mary came to the temple to do after the usual custom, they were poor and they could not bring a great offering to God. They brought two turtledoves, according to the law. The Lord had provided by law for the poor that they might bring an offering of two turtledoves, and they brought their simple offering for the child Jesus, who was the Son of the living God. When we bring an offering to God, what does He require? Is it a great gift? I will tell you what He requires; it is a gift according to what a man has, be it ever so simple. God will accept it according to that which you have. We can open our hearts to God whether we be rich or poor.

I am so thankful that when Mary came she came with turtledoves. I am so thankful that such an offering to God should be accepted in return for His great gift to us.

Just a little offering--two turtledoves! How simple the offering! Yet it is precious in the sight of God.

But now Satan has managed to turn our offerings from God to one another, and thus has exalted self in His stead. He has interposed self in between the creature and the Creator, in order to shut out the large offerings as well as the little rivulets of personal offerings from flowing into the treasury of the Lord to carry forward His work of mercy and love to the world. He has turned it into a channel of selfishness, to purchase toys and trifles that will do your children no good, and to make larger gifts to one another. This is the work of Satan, that the great work of salvation might be hindered and God's name might not receive the glory due to Him.

We do not want the cause of God to go crippling along for want of means that are needed upon the right hand and upon the left. We want the little rivulets to be turned into the treasury. Let every one bring in an offering to God. Don't you think that this is the way to observe Christmas? Don't you think it is the best way, rather than that means should go into the treasuries of the ungodly?

We do not have the gratitude we ought to have for the gift of God's Son. When Joseph and Mary were at the temple, while the smoke was ascending from off the altar, their prayers were going up with thanksgiving to God that He had provided them with an offering to bring to Him. But how is it with us when the children come to their birthdays? Do we make an offering to God for His goodness and care

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over the child for another year? Is this the way we do? Or do we go out and buy a present for the child and by so doing cultivate in the child a spirit of selfishness?

How much better it would be to teach the children, upon their birthday, that they should go to God with an offering upon that day. Teach them that they ought to lay up something to bring to God on their birthday, as a thank offering for His mercies over them through the year, and so keep God in their memory.

Anciently the parents were required to teach the children the statutes and commandments of God, when they should rise up and when they should sit down and when they should walk by the way. You may teach them what God has done for them, how God preserved them from death while other children were falling with disease, and that God will expect to be remembered by them and will accept an offering from their hands. This is the way we should instruct our children and set the example ourselves.

Satan is constantly at work to divert our minds from God, to bring us where we will glorify and honor self. Brethren and sisters, we want to have a change in this matter. It is serious business, this robbing God. There must be a change in this order of things. One of the greatest reasons for this state of things is this pride of dress, in the styles and fashions of the world. You want the first, the best, and last of everything to be given to Jesus Christ, and forsake this foolish spirit of fashion.

This is the great day of humiliation before God. Your eternal welfare depends upon your course of action. You should weave this through the minds of your children, and impress them with the things of God. You have let your work occupy your whole attention.

You have been more concerned with your work and drive in your household affairs than with teaching your children, beautifying and adorning their hearts, and giving them a beautiful character.

Now there is a new year coming, and as the light is streaming from the open door, every one of us should thirst for more and more of its illuminating power because the earth is growing darker and darker every day. Many have not experienced the fullness of this light upon their heart. Fathers and mothers, it is your duty before your families to let the love of God into your hearts, that they may see that you are bound up with their eternal interests, that when they do anything that grieves you it grieves Jesus. Unless you are persevering in your efforts, unless you are working all the time, Satan will overcome you at last, for he never ceases his vigilance.

We are to war against principalities. It is not a war against flesh and blood, but against wicked powers in high places. How can you do this? By every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Just as sure as you look into that mirror that [remainder missing].--Ms 8, 1880.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

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"I wish you a happy New Year," will soon be repeated far and near, by parents and children, brothers and sisters, acquaintances and friends. In a world like ours, this New Year's greeting seems far more appropriate than the Merry Christmas so lately echoed from lip to lip. On every hand are pale faces, brows furrowed with pain and care, or forms bowed with age. Wherever we turn may be seen the garb of mourning. The suffering, the careworn, and the aged can no longer be merry. In many a household there is a vacant chair; a beloved child, a husband and father, whose presence gladdened the last Christmas and New Year's festivity, is gone from the circle. A merry Christmas seems a mockery to that bereaved family.

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But whatever the cares and sorrows of life, whatever the mistakes and errors of the past, the "Happy New Year," when uttered as an expression of love or respect, falls pleasantly upon the ear. And yet, are not these kindly wishes often forgotten with the utterance? How often we fail to carry their import into the daily life, and thus to aid in their fulfillment. The New Year's greeting is frequently uttered by insincere lips, from hearts that would not forego one selfish gratification in order to make other's happy. Recipients of gifts and favors every new year, many accept these as their due. Receiving daily the bounties of Heaven, sunshine and shower, food and raiment, friends and home,--all the unnoted yet priceless blessings of life,--they forget the claims of the Giver; forget that God has left them a legacy in his poor; and that Christ, the Majesty of Heaven, identifies himself with suffering humanity in the person of his saints.

Says our Saviour, "It was I whom you neglected. While your wardrobe was supplied with costly apparel, I had no comfortable clothing; while you feasted, I was hungry; while you were absorbed in pleasure, I was sick, a stranger, and uncared for. Let those who would have a happy new year, seek to honor God and make all around them happy. Let them share the gifts of Providence with those more needy, and bring to the Lord their offerings of gratitude, their sin offerings, and their freewill offerings.

Let us review our own course during the past year, and compare our life and character with the Bible standard. Have we withheld from our gracious Benefactor that which he claims from us in return for all the blessings he has granted? Have we neglected to care for the poor, and comfort the sorrowing? Here, then, is work for us.

Upon many, God has bestowed his gifts with a lavish hand. Will they make corresponding returns? Some of these persons, when in poverty, were faithful in the smallest trust committed to them. They would sooner deny themselves of the comforts, or even the necessaries of life, than to withhold their offerings from the Lord's treasury. God has rewarded their faithfulness by prosperity. But now a change comes over the recipients of his bounty. Their wants increase faster than their income, and they no longer return to God the portion which is his due. Thus is developed that same spirit of covetousness which proved the ruin of Judas.

Let us each bring our souls to task. Let us see if we have brought all our offerings to God. I would do this for myself as an individual. It may be that I have been remiss during the past year. I know not when or where, but to make sure that I have done my whole duty, I will at the first of the year bring an offering to God to be appropriated as may seem best, to some one of the branches of his work. If any of you, my brethren and sisters, are convicted that you have failed to render to God the things that are his; if you have not kindly considered the wants of the poor; or if you have withheld from any man his due, I entreat you to repent before the Lord, and to restore fourfold. Strict honesty toward God and men will alone meet the divine requirements. Remember that if you have defrauded a neighbor in trade, or in any manner deprived him of his own, or if you have robbed God in tithes and offerings, it is all registered in the books of Heaven.

Many are bemoaning their backsliding, their want of peace and rest in Christ, when the past year's record shows that they have separated themselves from God by their departure from strict integrity. When they will faithfully examine their hearts, when they will open their eyes to see the selfishness of their motives,--then their prayer will be, "Create in me a clean heart O God; and renew a right spirit within me." God requires us to have a pure heart and clean hands. Let those who have committed wrong give proof of their repentance by seeking to make full restitution, let them in their afterlife give evidence of a genuine reformation, and they will assuredly enjoy the peace of Heaven.

Let us enter upon the new year with a clean record. Let faults be corrected. Let bitterness and malice be uprooted. Let right triumph over wrong. Let envy and jealousy between brethren be put away. Heartfelt,

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honest confession will heal grave difficulties. Then, with the love of God in the soul, there may flow from sincere lips the greeting, "I wish you a happy New Year."

Many who were with us at the beginning of 1881 are not here to welcome 1882. We ourselves may not live to see another year. Shall we not seek to improve the little time allotted us? Will not the church of Christ turn from their backslidings? Will they not cast aside their idols, repent of their love of the world, overcome their selfish greed, and open the door of the heart to bid the Saviour welcome? May the beginning of this year be a time that shall never be forgotten,--a time when Christ shall come in among us, and say, "Peace be unto you."

Brethren and sisters, I wish you, one and all, a happy New Year. "We live in deeds, not years; in thought, not breath; In feelings, not in figures on the dial. We should count time by heartthrobs when they beat-- For man, for duty. He most lives who thinks most, feels noblest, acts the best." By Mrs. E. G. White.