

## **Celebrate Xmas or Christmas?**

Eddie Daniels

With all that's taking place in our lives, our metro, and our nation, now is a good time to stop and remember all that God has done for us and all that God has given us.

It is time when we anticipate receiving a 13<sup>th</sup> cheque, or bonus or holiday pay and some sense of satisfaction we will derive as to how we will spend it.

I am reminded of the witty line that a Senior Minister used on his assistant when they were about to receive a pay raise. He said, "Now remember, this pay increase becomes effective as soon as you do!"

Is it a timely lesson for those who serve in public office too? – I'm just asking for a friend.

Christmas helps to encourage us to pause and to realise just how blessed we are with God's goodness and how much we are recipients of God's grace.

Such realisation is good because it leads us into the transforming wonder of giving thanks. Thankfulness is a way of living that makes thanksgiving an act of faith.

But let's spare a thought for those who do not have much to anticipate in the lead up to Christmas.

A once popular song about Christmas in 1984 had the following opening lines, " It's Christmas time, there's no need to be afraid. At Christmas time, we let in light, and we banish shade..." ("Do they know it's Christmas?" by the charity group Band Aid).

Light and Christmas are a powerful combination. Spiritually speaking, I suppose they are near synonymous because the anticipation of celebrating the birth of the Christ child is a window into letting in God's light into our dark, hurting and ailing world.

Incidentally, is it not striking that lights – plenty of multi-coloured lights – are used to signify that it is Christmas?

The challenge this Christmas presents is how are we collectively going to place something in the open upturned hands of those who look to us to meet a basic need for food?

Yes, some may claim to have worked hard and honestly in order to enjoy the fruits of their labour. I cannot fault the reasoning. However, how do I really enjoy sumptuous excess when others are going hungry?

C. S. Lewis said, "We really celebrate two holidays on December 25th. One we call 'Xmas' and the other we call 'Christmas.'"

Is it not high time that we make an unambiguous differentiation between the two?

There is a profound difference between them which extends beyond abbreviation or shorthand. Xmas takes: it takes financial resources to buy presents. Christmas is a

gift that keeps on giving otherwise known as the grace that comes from the Creator God.

Personal circumstances can so easily rob us of Xmas. For example, if we can't buy the gifts, don't have the money and if we don't feel a part of things - what if we are suffering pain or hardship - all these can rob us of Xmas, because Xmas depends on circumstances such as presents, cards and everything that goes with it. If they are not there, then we'll not have a merry Xmas.

Christmas, however, comes anyway. It is therefore important to realise that nothing can rob us of the real joy of Christmas.

Xmas implies the following: a fictitious figure called Father Christmas, decorations for a tree and presents.

Christmas, in contrast, is about a Saviour Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Christmas is about people such as the shepherds and magi. Most importantly, in Christmas we have a priceless gift that will last forever.

The challenge before us in 2021 is in the choice you and I will make: celebrate Xmas or Christmas?

I want to briefly offer a few reasons why we ought to keep the two separate.

We need to do some spring cleaning. It is so easy to accumulate a lot of stuff.

For example, presents to open and guests to entertain.

Some may be privileged to return or exchange gifts for multifarious reasons whilst others would receive nothing.

This is where the adage, "caring is sharing", rings true. Perhaps this Christmas is a time to show how much we truly care about those less fortunate than ourselves.

Sometimes it is the way of our hearts – so many things to see to and deadlines to meet with people to please.

Maybe we need to make room in our hearts for the Lord Jesus and those of whom the chorus line of the earlier mentioned song reminds us,

"But say a prayer, Pray for the other ones

At Christmas time it's hard, but when you're having fun

There's a world outside your window

And it's a world of dread and fear

Where the only water flowing

Is the bitter sting of tears...

Do they know it's Christmas time at all?"

Christmas is a reminder that God who so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son and still He gives, and gives, and gives without end.

Isn't it time we showed God our thanks by giving so that others may know it is Christmas in 2021?

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