Sunday 9th June 2013 Message for Lighthouse CC

# Guaranteeing Immanuel (God With Us)

(A continuation of my message of 26th May)

When Jesus came to earth – one of His names was IMMANUEL – God With Us. The ecstatic celebration of His advent was because, at long last God and Man are re-united

When you realise what true Christianity is, you will also realise why it is “all or nothing” from our human point of view!

\*The word “Christian” is the ‘earthly religious name’ for those who followed Jesus

* Act 11:26 *And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called* ***Christians*** *first in Antioch.*
* Should we call ourselves a Christian? (Richard Anthony) How and when was the word **"Christian"** first used? The term 'Christian' was used to describe a follwer of Christ in terms of the world, from the world’s point of view. The pagans at Antioch called the apostles "Christians" first (Acts 11:26; 26:28) and used it derogatorily because the apostles didn’t follow the commercial world of the pagans. "Christian" is an adjective, not a noun. The substance is not in the word "Christian", the substance is in the heart of the man it is attempting to describe, and which the pagan user cannot see. Christ never called himself a Christian, Christ never called his followers Christians. The apostles never called each other Christians. Christ never used an adjective to describe himself. So how are we to identify ourselves then? The disciples called each other, "brethren", "disciples", "apostles", "servants", "believers", "followers", "the faithful", "the elect", "the called", and "saints." We can also identify ourselves as "bondservants" of Christ.
* [Pliny the Younger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pliny_the_Younger) in [correspondence with Trajan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistulae_(Pliny)); and [Tacitus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tacitus_on_Christ), writing near the end of the 1st century. In the [*Annals*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annals_(Tacitus)) he relates that "by vulgar appellation [they were] commonly called Christians"[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian#cite_note-12) and identifies Christians as [Nero](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero)'s scapegoats for the [Great Fire of Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Fire_of_Rome).

(‘Followers of Jesus’ is a more accurate term)

The Good News of Jesus is: (summararily)

* God, the creator of all things, is looking for those who will accept his invitation to be redeemed and born into His family to achieve His eternal purposes. He has made this provision through His son (who’s earthly name was ‘Jesus of Nazareth’).

A Christian is:

* One who follows Jesus.
* One who believes in Jesus and obeys him –
* A DISCIPLE of Christ

See “Recall Notice” (Another Way of Describing the Gospel)

## RECALL NOTICE:

The Maker of all human beings (GOD) is recalling all units manufactured, regardless of make or year, due to a serious defect in the primary and central component of the heart.   
  
This is due to a malfunction in the original prototype units code named Adam and Eve, resulting in the reproduction of the same defect in all subsequent units.   
This defect has been identified as "Subsequential Internal Non-morality," more commonly known as S.I.N., as it is primarily expressed.   
  
Some of the symptoms include:   
1. Loss of direction   
2. Foul vocal emissions   
3. Amnesia of origin   
4. Lack of peace and joy   
5. Selfish or violent behavior   
6. Depression or confusion  
7. Fearfulness  
8. Idolatry   
9. Rebellion   
  
The Manufacturer, who is neither liable nor at fault for this defect, is providing factory-authorized repair and service free of charge to correct this defect.   
The Repair Technician, JESUS, has most generously offered to bear the entire burden of the staggering cost of these repairs. There is no additional fee required.   
  
The number to call for repair in all areas is: P-R-A-Y-E-R.   
Once connected, please upload your burden of SIN through the REPENTANCE procedure.   
  
Next, download ATONEMENT from the Repair Technician, Jesus, into the heart component.   
  
No matter how big or small the SIN defect is, Jesus will replace it with:   
1. Love   
2. Joy   
3. Peace   
4. Patience   
5. Kindness   
6. Goodness   
7. Faithfulness   
8. Gentleness   
9. Self control   
Please see the operating manual, the B.I.B.L.E. (BEST Instructions Before Leaving Earth) for further details on the use of these fixes.   
  
WARNING: Continuing to operate the human being unit without correction voids any manufacturer warranties, exposing the unit to dangers and problems too numerous to list, and will result in the human unit being permanently impounded. For free emergency service, call on Jesus.   
  
DANGER: The human being units not responding to this recall action will have to be scrapped in the furnace. The SIN defect will not be permitted to enter Heaven so as to prevent contamination of that facility. Thank you for your attention! 

Jesus is not only

* The most worth hero
* The most worthy example for us to follow BUT

He is the ONLY option that God has provided

* To REPAIR us – remedy our faults
* To RESTORE us – to Divine Sonship
* To REDEFINE our eternal purpose

So today, to have various types of “Christians” is both oxymoronic and utterly confusing –

Note: Christianity Today International recently partnered with Zondervan Publishers in order to commission a study on the attitudes and behaviour of professing Christians in the United States.

### Results:

There are five kinds of Christians:

1. Active,
2. Professing,
3. Liturgical,
4. Private and
5. Cultural Christians.

Interestingly, each group represents around 20% of the population that identifies itself as Christian, with Private Christians holding a slight edge at 24%, and Liturgical Christians reflecting the smallest grouping at 16%.

So what kind Christian do these groups represent?

### 1 Active Christians (19%)

\*Believe salvation comes through Jesus Christ

\*Committed churchgoers

\*Bible readers

\*Accept leadership positions

\*Invest in personal faith development through the local church

\*Feel obligated to share their faith (and 79% do so)

### 2 Professing Christians (20%)

\*Believe salvation comes through Jesus Christ

\*Focus on personal relationship with God and Jesus

\*Similar beliefs to Active Christians, but with different actions

\*Less involved in church in regard to both attending and serving

\*Less commitment to Bible reading and sharing faith

### 3 Liturgical Christians (16%)

\*Predominantly Catholic and Lutheran

\*Regular churchgoers

\*High level of spiritual activity, mostly expressed by serving in church and/or community

\*Recognize authority of the church

### 4 Private Christians (24%)

\*Largest and youngest segment

\*Believe in God and doing good things

\*Own a Bible, but don’t read it

\*Spiritual interest, but not within a church context

\*Only about one-third attend church at all

\*Almost none are church leaders

### 5 Cultural Christians (21%)

\*Little outward religious behavior or attitudes

\*God aware, but little personal involvement with God

\*Do not view Jesus as essential to salvation

\*Affirm many ways to God

\*Favor universality theology

All the above are Oxymoron! Devil’s Lies!

Therefore - what is a (true) Christian?

One who follows Jesus. One who believes in Jesus and obeys him - a DISCIPLE of Christ *– One who follows Christ, imbibes His teachings and takes over His cause!*

(Of the five groups, the last two (Private and Cultural) the most pressing. **Private Christians** reflect the loss of the emerging generation to the church, which means they become “spiritual do-it-yourselfers” who are divorced from Christian community. Cultural Christians reflect the loss of the content of Christianity itself, which means that anything and everything can become equated with Christianity.)

#### But when we realise God’s incredible plan and purposes for us, His instructions, exhortations, advice, commands etc are no longer grievous to us but EAGERLY WELCOME!

A la David’s words in Psalm 19

2 The heavens declare the glory of God;

the sky proclaims its builder’s craft.

3 One day to the next conveys that message;

one night to the next imparts that knowledge.

4 There is no word or sound;

no voice is heard;

5 Yet their report goes forth through all the earth,

their message, to the ends of the world.

God has pitched there a tent for the sun;

6 it comes forth like a bridegroom from his chamber,

and like an athlete joyfully runs its course.

7 From one end of the heavens it comes forth;

its course runs through to the other;

nothing escapes its heat.

*8 The law of the LORD is perfect,*

*refreshing the soul.*

*The decree of the LORD is trustworthy,*

*giving wisdom to the simple.*

*9 The precepts of the LORD are right,*

*rejoicing the heart.*

*The command of the LORD is clear,*

*enlightening the eye.*

*10 The fear of the LORD is pure,*

*enduring forever.*

*The statutes of the LORD are true,*

*all of them just;*

*11 More desirable than gold,*

*than a hoard of purest gold,*

*Sweeter also than honey*

*or drippings from the comb.*

*12 By them your servant is instructed;*

*obeying them brings much reward*

### Ten Examples of God’s Welcoming Words:

* Be Fully Surrendered
  + *I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship* (Rom. 12:1)
* Be Holy
  + **1Peter 1:15-16** *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy*.
* Be Worshipful
  + *singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts,giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.* Eph. 5:219
* Be Obedient
  + Heb 13:17 *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you*
* Be Generous
  + **2Cor 8:7** Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing, in* faith, and utterance, and *knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also* g((Grace of generosity)
* Be Loving (to neighbour)
  + John 13:34 *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*
* Be Filled with His Spirit
  + *And do not get drunk on wine, in which lies debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,* (Eph. 5:18)
* Be Transformed
  + *but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.* (Rom. 12:1-2)
* Support God’s House
  + Heb 10:25 *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

#### These are not grievous but delightful, desirable, most welcome – like honey and gold☺

So don’t worry about ‘keeping up appearances’, performing, being good enough, trying harder, being more religious and holy – FORGET IT! Just appreciate His loving welcome to you into His family and enter in, embracing His love and inheritance. Enjoy Him!

Passive Christian?

Note Rick Warren's quote:

"Let me just be honest with you as somebody who loves you. If you passively just want to sit around in the next 10 years and just waste your life on things that won't last, you probably want to find another church because you're not going to really feel comfortable here. Because if you're in this church, I'm coming after you to be mobilized," said the renowned Southern Californian"

Somewhere, somehow, someone distorted what it means to follow Jesus.

So then, have your minds ready for action. Keep alert and set your hope completely on the blessing which will be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1:13 GNB)

# QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

* How would you describe a “Christian”?
* What problems can you see with the definition “Christian”?
* What do you say when someone asks ‘What religion are you?’ ?
* Can you think of better definitions that reflect more accurately what you are?
* Why do you think we have “5 Different Types of Christians”?
* Which type do you feel is the worst?
* What do you think of this statement: “*The only true Christian is an ACTIVE CHRISTIAN*”?
* Looking at Psalm 19:8-12 – what is a true Christian’s attitude toward God’s standards?
* Looking at the ten examples of God’s Welcoming Words – how do you rate in your attitude to them?
* Which ones do I really have to work on currently – with God’s help?