

December 2017 from Pastor Rich

Merry, Happy, Merry, Happy, Christmas!

**KEEP
CHRIST IN
CHRISTMAS**

25...24...23...22...21, again the days are counted down until Christmas arrives. The day when families gather around the Christmas tree to open all of the gifts under the tree for the past several weeks. Let the paper start flying.

We have been conditioned to reflect on this time of year as one that is cheerful, bright, and festive, along with trying to figure out what's the most practical gift we can buy for someone. A lot of time, effort, and work are put into this time of year for a few moments of Christmas cheer.

I was going into a store just the other morning as I passed a bell ringer for the Salvation Army and they greeted me with the words Happy Holidays. I immediately responded back to them, Merry Christmas and they responded back as well, Merry Christmas. I thought it odd when they responded back with Merry Christmas, but as I thought more about it I believe that even those who work at ringing those Christmas bells for the Salvation Army may have been told not to say Merry Christmas in order not to offend anyone they meet. Of course, this is pure conjecture on my part, but it made me realize how conditioned society has become in order not to offend someone with the word Christ in it.

I have to admit that sometimes I get so busy and preoccupied that when someone says Happy Holidays to me I say Happy Holidays back. I'm sure that many of you have had the same things occur for you.

The question becomes, for Christians, how much influence does the world play in our every day lives? I believe it plays a huge roll in it. We don't want to make anyone mad or get into a discussion about Christmas because it is such a wonderful time of the year.

What makes it a wonderful time of year for Christians? It is the fact of the incarnation of Jesus Christ into the world. He was born to bring those who believe in Him the gift of eternal life. Did Jesus' birth go over well with the world? No! In fact, King Herod tried to kill Jesus because he understood this Jesus to be a threat to his kingship. He was right about the threat to his kingship but not from a worldly view.

Jesus came into the world to establish a spiritual kingdom with a promise of a gift. The gift of forgiveness through His death and resurrection. Through this gift, which Jesus promised to us, also came a promise of eternal life. A promise that has stood the history of the world. But people don't want to believe in this promise because it takes away a sense of entitlement the world believes it has. Don't tread on my rights!

Jesus sure was a crowd pleaser wasn't He. He made sure that everyone went away happy when He taught, did miracles, and ate with sinners.

My point being is that let's celebrate this Christmas season by not being conditioned by the world, but to let the world know why we celebrate at this time of year. It's not because of presents we get, the great goodies everyone makes, or even the getting together of family and friends, but the inexpressible gift God has sent to us in His Son Jesus Christ. How about remembering Jesus this Christmas instead of being influenced by the world. Stand upon the promise we have been given and know that Jesus is always with you, and will not forsake you. That is His promise to you. Will you believe that promise, or fall prey to the world as it tries to drive the very memory of why Christmas is celebrated at all?

So, when someone says Happy Holidays, think of why you celebrate this beautiful, festive, and joyous occasion. It is because of the promise made long ago by the one who was born into this world in order to save us from the conditionings of this world.

May God grant you all a *Merry Christmas* and a season filled with joy, happiness, and the presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Merry Christmas and Season's Greetings!

To each and every one.

In Christ's Service and Love,

Pastor Rich