

THOUGHTS

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SPEAKER ON THE WORD TODAY

DECEMBER

2016

Thoughts
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FEELING FESTIVE?

What strange emotions can occupy us when we approach important dates like our birthday, Easter or Christmas! I find that for a few weeks each year, usually well into the New Year, perhaps around the end of January or beginning of February, I get down on the world and life. Is it seasonal affective disorder? Perhaps. It usually dissipates after a few weeks of churning through responsibilities and self-talk such as, "C'mon! No self-pity trips!" I find that keeping one's good and godly routines helps to remain on course in life. I continue to delve into the Word of God for personal learning and reflection with prayer, go to the health club to do workout even though it may seem pointless, and reach out to others to socialize to keep my thoughts other-directed. It works, and soon I am back on track.

It does seem laughable that we had crying zones or comfort dogs employed for college students who couldn't cope with the election results. But, consider that for many of these people they do not have faith in Christ as a coping mechanism. Basically, they feel there is no larger purpose in existence than physical existence, and they do not adhere to the Kingdom of God, so if they perceive this earthly estate as crumbling they will get very scared. I suspect there will be much booing rather than chirping "Merry Christmas" in certain circles.

Never has Christian joy meant more! You may not feel terribly festive over the Christmas and New Year time, but give it time. Over the past 8 years I said to myself nearly every day, "I have to keep the joy," meaning that as a Christian I still have the joy of Christ despite seeing my country pushing secular, anti-Christian values on me and the Church. Now that there is hope for rolling back some of those Humanist values my phrase has become, "I have to *show* the joy!" Despite the arrival at times of a brief moment of languid emotions, I'm feeling very joy filled!

WHAT DOES CHRISTMAS MEAN?

Christmas means many different things depending upon whom you ask, "What does Christmas mean?" Usually an allusion to "good will" or universal human kindness is obligatory, followed by thankfulness for family and friends. Christmas means a much different thing to a 23 year old liberal cohabiting and pursuing their "spirituality" than it does to a believer in Syria who might be killed for adhering to faith in Christ. In the one case it is just a few days of vacation from work, but in the other it is an eternal lifeline thrown by the Father.

*The Bible is God's Word . . . Jesus is God's "Word" made flesh . . .
His death and resurrection, the message needed Today.*



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Biblical ignorance is at an all-time high in America. A shocking percentage of people do not know the most fundamental, Sunday School level information about the Bible, such as the Ten Commandments, the basic sketch of history of the Jewish people in the Old Testament, or the essentials of the life of Christ. I befriended an engineer who is my age and has no background in Christianity. When archaeologists opened the vault traditionally held as the burial chamber of Christ in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem about a month ago he texted me, "Is it true! Is that the tomb Jesus was raised from?" I happily shared that in my travels to Israel I have seen that site, and the important thing is the resurrection itself, not the spot.

Christmas is fairly the opposite of the emotions we tend to enshrine; it is about hardship, displacement, encroachment of evil, a literal cosmic battle for the souls of mankind. It is also about the love of the Father for us much more so than nebulous sentiments of goodwill toward each other. It is about forgiveness and sacrifice, for the babe of Bethlehem was being born to be the Messiah, the one who would sacrifice himself for our redemption.

I never say, "Merry Christmas," to people, but always, "Blessed Christmas," or "Joyful Christmas," or similar variant. Why? I want people to avoid the tired phraseology, to have them pause and consider a moment the uniquely spiritual aspect of Christmas. I don't want people in a party spirit; I want them in a contemplative and thankful spirit. So... A Blessed and Joyful Christmas to you!

NEVER HAS YOUR PERSONAL EVANGELISM BEEN MORE NEEDED

Jesus looked at culture in his day and likened it to a ripened field of wheat ready for harvest. I feel the same about the world in our day. We now have 25% of the population identifying in surveys as "None", having no religious affiliation! That is shocking and very disturbing for the future welfare of the Christian Church and our nation going forward.

However, the authentic opportunity to evangelize and save people from that culture has never been greater! We now have many in our culture with scant knowledge of the Bible, and we can teach them! I am currently evangelizing two men I have met in the last few years, both of whom are open to discussion of faith. You likely know adults aged 20-50 who are Biblically ignorant; God wants to use you as a witness, someone who testifies to the truth of the Bible and shows how it looks as it is lived out!

I fear most of the "Nones" have turned away permanently, destined for Hell. But, many are open, just suspect of organized religion. Get read up on answers to Darwinism, the greatest driver of disbelief today, relax and settle into a joyful demeanor as you have God's grace and salvation, and, "In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have (I Peter 3:15)."

Blessings!
Douglas W. Schroeder