TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch /Opening Prayer by: Jerry Mallernee

Morning Assembly Song Leader: Bobby Rader

#23 Our God, He is Alive
#611 Heavenly Sunlight

Scripture Reading by: Rock Cary
#366 By Christ Redeemed
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#716 Sing to Me of Heaven
Sermon: "If Christ Had Not Come For Me"
Isaiah 53:3-5

#907 Hark the Gentle Voice
#610 I Love My Savior, Too

Closing Prayer by: Robert Ward

3rd Sunday Night Singing

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

December 19, 2021

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

Why Arguments About Christmas Are Counterproductive

I know that several of us have mixed emotions about Christmas. Many of us probably heard lessons—lectures, really—at this time of year when we were growing up to the effect that Jesus was not born on December 25th. That's true. But what a terrible message to leave in people's hearts at a time when they are thinking about Christ! The important thing is that, whenever he came, he came; that has made all the difference. The following article from Wes McAdams, preacher for the McDermott Road Church of Christ in Plano, on his blog "Radically Christian" sums this all up really well. I present it here unabridged (and urge you again to check out his website, which is full of excellent material). BP

In my childhood, I argued about Christmas a lot. "You know," I would say in a matter-of-fact tone, "Jesus wasn't really born on December 25th." I relished correcting people about the inaccuracies of their religious holiday and their little nativity scenes. Since then I've learned, you can be right and be wrong at the same time. I was right, Jesus most likely was not born on December 25th, but I was dead wrong for thinking that rudely arguing that point was somehow pleasing to God.

I still don't celebrate Jesus' "birthday" on December 25th, but I also don't see any reason to vehemently argue about it either. In fact, it seems like Paul's instructions to the church in Rome are very applicable to this issue:
Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God…Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. **(Romans 14:4-6,10)**

Here are several other reasons our arguing about Christmas is counterproductive:

1. We become hypocritical.
I've always found it interesting that some people avoid using the word, "Christmas" because it indicates a celebration of Christ's birthday and the Catholic "Mass" from which the celebration originated. Alternatively, they insist on using the word "holiday." But it shouldn't be hard to see the irony in that. The etymology of the word "holiday" is "holy day," meaning a day set apart by God or for God.

Furthermore, some point out the pagan traditions that have been incorporated into the traditional Christmas celebration (i.e. trees, gifts, ornaments, etc.). They insist that these celebrations are wrong because they have pagan origins. However, these same folks are usually not consistent with all of the other things in our culture that have pagan origins. For example, "Thursday" means "Thor's Day," an obvious reference to the mythological god, Thor. But I don't know anyone who claims it is wrong to use the word, "Thursday."

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Sewilla Scott is in the hospital.

Richard Williamson is in the hospital with double pneumonia.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Gwen Pettit, Harold & Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Frank & Tina Garcia, Winston Leifester, Caitlin Smith, Ka'Leisha Jones, Oscar Cantu, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Gary Nielsen, Jackie David, Virginia Cole

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister, meeting Monday, Dec. 20th at 5:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Monday, Dec. 20th at 8:00 a.m.

The office will be closed Thursday and Friday, Dec. 23rd & 24th.

We will not have evening service on Sunday, Dec. 26th.

Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to Ollie Davis and her family on the death of her brother, Paul Damek. His funeral was Friday.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Ken Coleman	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Danny Balch	
Don Taylor		
Robert Ward		

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"
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Biblically, consider the meat that first-century Christians bought in the marketplace. It might have been sacrificed to an idol at one time, but it had lost that significance when it was put on the table of a Christian home. Paul taught that Christians were not honoring an idol by simply eating meat that had once been sacrificed to an idol **(1 Corinthians 10:23-30)**.The meat had lost the pagan significance.

I am no more worshiping a pagan idol by having a Christmas tree in my home than I am honoring Thor by calling the fifth day of the week, "Thursday."

2. We stir up unnecessary strife.
The New Testament has nothing positive to say about these kinds of arguments. Paul wrote to Timothy, "*Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers*" **(2 Timothy 2:14**). Over the years, I have heard many heated debates about this issue and I've never seen anything good come of it.

That's not to say we shouldn't teach people the truth. We should. But unless we can teach people the truth with gentleness, patience, kindness, forbearance, and love, then we don't have the Spirit of God in us **(Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:1-3)** and it is us who needs to be taught.

3. We de-emphasize Jesus.
Growing up, it was ok to talk about Jesus any day of the year. But for some reason, I felt very odd talking about Jesus on Christmas. That was a Jesus-free day. In my effort to show people I was not denominational, I dismissed my Lord. How very sad.

While some groups are having extra worship services, others cancel their regular worship services and Bible studies. While some people are talking about Jesus more, others are talking about Jesus less. In an effort to avoid being seen as celebrating "Christmas," we sometimes fail to celebrate Christ.

Jesus *is* the reason for the season. Jesus is the reason for *every* season. Jesus is the reason for *everything*. I regret that I ever de-emphasized Christ. I should have been rejoicing that many people were thinking about the King of kings. Instead, I was so preoccupied with being anti-denominational that I forgot to be Christian.

Truth in Love
There is nothing wrong with discussing the *true* story of Jesus' birth, but there is something wrong with fighting and arguing about it. Let's talk about Jesus more, not less. And let's be more loving, more kind, and more patient.