

Pastor's Pen

Rejoice!

**"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice."
Philippians 4:23**

This week, Christians will gather together with friends and family to celebrate the birth of our Savior. Christmas is the time of year that the world celebrates what they call the holiday season. There is Christmas music, light displays, Christmas trees, and all kinds of decorations. I hear many Christians voice their concern that the world wants to diminish the Christmas holiday. It may come to surprise you, but not to dissent, past Christmas was not celebrated by all Christians. On Sunday morning, December 24, 1871, entitled, "Joy Born at Bethlehem," Charles Spurgeon began his sermon with these words:

"We have no superstitious regard for times and seasons. Certainly we do not believe in the present ecclesiastical arrangement called Christmas. First, because we do not believe in the mass at all, but abhor it, whether it be sung in Latin or in English; and secondly, because we find no Scriptural warrant whatever for observing any day as the birthday of the Savior; and consequently, its observance is a superstition, because not of divine authority. Superstition has fixed most positively the day of our Savior's birth, although there is no possibility of discovering when it occurred. ... It was not till the middle of the third century that any part of the church celebrated the nativity of our Lord; and it was not till very long after the Western church had set the example, that the Eastern adopted it. ... Probably the fact is that the "holy" days were arranged to fit in with the heathen festivals. We venture to assert, that if there be any day in the year, of which we may be pretty sure that it was not the day on which the Savior was born, it is December 25. Nevertheless since, the current of men's thoughts is led this way just now, and I see no evil in the current itself, I shall launch the bark of our discourse upon that stream, and make use of the fact, which I shall neither justify nor condemn, by endeavoring to lead your thoughts in the same direction.

Since it is lawful, and even laudable, to meditate upon the incarnation of the Lord upon any day in the year, it cannot be in the power of other men's superstitions to render such a meditation improper for to-day. Regarding not the day, let us, nevertheless, give God thanks for the gift of His dear Son."

In the early years of Christianity, Easter was the main holiday, and the birth of Jesus was not celebrated. In the fourth century, church officials decided to institute the birth of Jesus as a holiday. In England, the puritans did not celebrate Christmas in the 17th century because the celebrations led to heavy drinking and sexual debauchery.

Before you think that your pastor is the original scrooge, I celebrate our Lord and Savior's birth every Christmas even if the evidence supports His birth in the spring (shepherds in Palestine did not watch over their sheep in winter).

As Christians, we are told to rejoice at our Savior's birth, but we are also commanded to rejoice in the Lord always. That means not just at Christmas or when things are going well, or when I feel like rejoicing. Christian, rejoice in the birth of our Savior, rejoice in your salvation, rejoice in your trials, rejoice in all and every circumstance. Paul explains why we can rejoice in all circumstances, "The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God (4:5-6)." Then, "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (4:8). May the Lord bless you and keep you and may you have a Merry Christmas.

Your shepherd,

Pastor Mark

Quote of the Week

"God does not command
what he does not make possible."
— Steven J. Lawson

Grace Gems

10 Questions to Ask at a Christmas Gathering (Don Whitney)

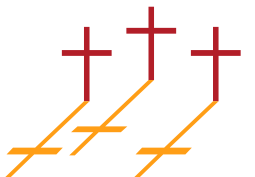
Many of us struggle to make conversation at Christmas gatherings, whether church events, work-related parties, neighborhood drop-ins, or annual family occasions. Sometimes our difficulty lies in having to chat with people we rarely see or have never met.

At other times we simply don't know what to say to those with whom we feel little in common. Moreover, as Christians we want to take advantage of the special opportunities provided by the Christmas season to share our faith, but are often unsure how to begin.

Here's a list of questions designed not only to kindle a conversation in almost any Christmas situation, but also to take the dialog gradually to a deeper level. Use them in a private conversation or as a group exercise, with believers or unbelievers, with strangers or with family.

1. What's the best thing that's happened to you since last Christmas?
2. When was your best Christmas ever? Why?
3. What's the most meaningful Christmas gift you've ever received?
4. What was the most appreciated Christmas gift you've ever given?
5. What was your favorite Christmas tradition as a child?
6. What is your favorite Christmas tradition now?
7. What do you do to try to keep Christ in Christmas?
8. Why do you think people started celebrating the birth of Jesus?
9. Do you think the birth of Jesus deserves such a worldwide celebration?
10. Why do you think Jesus came to earth?

Of course, remember to pray before your Christmas gatherings. Ask the Lord to grant you "divine appointments," to guide your conversations, and to open doors for the gospel. May He use you to bring glory to Christ this Christmas.



Weekly Gatherings



Bible Classes

New Testament
Sunday School
Sunday Morning @ 9-9:45 & 10-10:45



Weekday Meetings

Mondays | 7PM
Men's Zoom Bible Study



Job Study

Wednesdays @ 7PM
Teaching Series (Online Only)



Build the Body Teams

If you would like to serve on a BtB Team and forgot to sign up, please contact the team leader at the appropriate email address.



Youth Study

Wednesdays @6:30PM
Youth Study
AWANA @6:30PM-8PM



Service Times

Sunday Service 8:30AM & 10:30AM
Children's Church @10:30AM

Giving from service on 12/13/2020	
General Offering	7,077.65
Building Fund	6,073.00
Lottie Moon	1,540.00
Total	\$14,690.65
Attendance	145
Online.....	25
Lottie Moon.....	2,540.00
Goal.....	5,500.00

Build the Body Ministries

- Women's Ministry-women@ghbcva.org
- AWANA-awana@ghbcva.org
- Outreach Ministry-outreach@ghbcva.org
- Worship Ministry-worship@ghbcva.org
- Men's Ministry-men@ghbcva.org
- Children's Ministry-children@ghbcva.org
- Youth Ministry-youth@ghbcva.org
- Prayer Team-prayer@ghbcva.org
- Maintenance-maintenance @ghbcva.org
- Fellowship-fellowship@ghbcva.org
- Communications-communications@ghbcva.org
- Front Line-frontline@ghbcva.org
- Security-security@ghbcva.org



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Grace Harvest Baptist Church

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