

Solo Deo Gloria – What's in a Name?

What's in a name or word? Have you ever pondered that thought? Names have meaning. In our Western culture we seem to have lost that idea. Names have meaning! In fact, once upon a time the name told the story of a person's character. Their attitudes, behavior and personality were in their name. I read recently about a little boy who had been named Adolph Hitler by his parents, and a local store would not make a birthday cake with his name on it. The name of Adolph Hitler has a sinister meaning because of the life of a person who was named Adolph Hitler. And when the name Adolph or Hitler is expressed, strong negative emotions are provoked within most people. Why? Because of the man's behavior and attitude. Plainly put, names have meaning. But of course a name is nothing more than a word. In an age of text messaging and sound bites, we as a culture pay little attention to how we use words and what they may mean as history in the future, or even in our attitudes and behavior. But words in our heads do play a role in our attitudes, and ultimately in our behavior. The meaning of those words in our head is the foundation of behavior and attitude toward others. In fact, our future rests in the words we carry in our minds. In Matthew 12: 36-37 Jesus tells us about how important words are. He says, **"I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."** (ESV) This tells me that I have words in my head that are or can be destructive to my well being. What about you?

"Now, why are words important to us this time of the year?" you may be asking. Because this is a season of celebration that we in our culture and around the world call Christmas. The word "Christmas" comes from two words, Christ and Mass. The word Christ is very familiar to most people. But the meaning is only familiar to some. The meaning of the word Christ comes from the Greek word Christos which means the "Anointed One" or "Messiah". Within this name – Christ – lies a purpose and meaning that is unfathomable to the mind of us mere mortals. The fate of the whole universe exists in this name. This name cannot be separated from the bearer of the name as a name such as John, would be. A name like John can float from person to person or exist on paper to help identify different people. The name, Christ, however is the name or title above all earthly names or titles. It, Christ, indicates and shows to the world the purpose and character of the one who came into the world 2000 years ago. The name tells us of a love that is so magnificent that the human mind cannot comprehend the totality of its meaning. It is a name that is despised. It is a name that provokes conflicts. It is a name that gives comfort and calms emotions. It is a name that relieves anxiety and depression. It is a name that helps in time of grief. It is a name that, throughout history, people have fought wars over. It provokes strong love and devotion or it can provoke a strong hate toward others. It is a name above names.

The word Mass pertains to a work of God that was accomplished by the Son of God through His birth, death and resurrection, whereby His grace rests on those who believe in Him. The work of God is probably the least accepted of the "Christmas" celebration, but no less the most important. It is that which can save from evil. It is that which can bring peace to a world in chaos and conflict as is experienced today. Really, it is the only thing that can bring peace. We humans have a poor track record of bringing peace. Throughout human history, humans have believed in self efforts to make peace with each other, but have not succeeded and never will. The words that make up Christmas point us to the way, the only way. Put the two words, Christ and Mass, together, and it is no

wonder that the greatest celebration on this earth takes place around the birth of the Christ child. By the way, this celebration is around the child who lives today. Otherwise, why celebrate a dead person who no longer exists to have any influence over human kind. Therefore, this season should be of praises and shouts of joy to Him, not in things we give to others, nor family gatherings where the past year is discussed and hugs take place. It is He who should be talked about. It is He who should be hugged. It is He who should be sitting at the dinner table with us. It is He who should receive our presents of surrender, joy, worship, devotion, and tears.

What meaning do you and I apply to the word, Christmas? Do we hold to a meaning that people around us have decided that it means to them? Do we hold to the meaning our society applies to Christmas? Do we hold to the meaning that federal and state government applies to it? Even though official government statements and many of those who are in business put out disclaimers regarding the word Christmas, they still have applied a meaning to the word. Even the disclaimer reflects their meaning. The question is, "What does it really mean? What is the truth of its meaning?" The sad thing about the meaning is that the world applies a meaning that is not truth. The ONLY place where meaning can be found is in being an eye witness and having personal knowledge of the one who is called Christ. Any other meaning applied to that word, Christmas, is only hearsay evidence and would never be accepted in a court of law for truth. Find the truth of Christmas. Search God's Word. Reject hearsay evidence. It is not admissible in court.

My desire and hope is that the Christ and all His works will be celebrated with great gusto and joy in your personal life and family. There is another word in the English language that is labeled faith; faith goes with the celebration of Christmas. How can we celebrate without faith? And – oh, yes – there is another name connected to the Lord Christ. We've all heard of it. Jesus. Now what does that name mean? Savior. Wow!

As Isaac Watts said in 1719:

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,

And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

And in Luke 2:10-14 we find these words:

And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid for, behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger." And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." (NASB)

The family at Hope Fruit and Berry Farm is celebrating the birth of the King, Counselor, Comforter, Prophet, Savior, Lord and Priest. He is worthy of all our celebration. Please join us in celebration and worship of Him at your house. My hope is that we can all bow before the Christ child and say, "How Great Thou Art."

May God richly bless in your household.

Dewey Wise
Hope Fruit and Berry Farm
December 22, 2008