

Please forgive my recycling an article I wrote three years ago, but it seems as if once again many Christians are nettled that some people would have the temerity to say, "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas," at least judging from mass emails that grace my computer every morning. [By the way, "holiday" is a contraction of "holy day.]

May I humbly suggest we Christians might have more important things to worry about? Now, I realize that many want to emphasize "Merry Christmas" as a way of standing against the tide of secularization. We want to remind folks that the essence of this season is, in fact, Christ. We don't want to pretend that New Years Day is as important as the birth of our savior. On the other hand, we make Christmas (the birth of Christ) real, not by chastising others for their choice of words, but through our constant witness of love, grace, help, and kindness. Well, anyway, here's what I wrote a few years ago...

Are you offended when someone says, "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas?"

We might remember last year, when people threatened to boycott one multi-billion dollar store chain because its employees were instructed to say "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas." [I found it amusing that Christians could overlook that company's not offering decent health care insurance, using illegal aliens, and forcing workers to work unpaid overtime hours, but then were simply outraged at "Happy Holidays!"]

The issue has arisen again this year. Might I dare to invite you not to be so vexed about all this? After all, to say "Happy Holidays" reminds us that Jewish friends are celebrating Hanukkah and reminds us that right after Christmas comes New Years, itself a holiday with promise of new beginnings, new possibilities, new directions.

And, if we think about it, in Greek at least, the root word for "happy" is the same as "blessed." So, if we wanted to push the point, "Happy Holiday" is another way of wishing someone "Blessed Holy Days." Not such a bad hope!

Now, what about "Merry Christmas?" What are we really wishing when we say this phrase? It might be more suspect than we believe. After all, the root meaning of "merry" implies drunken delight. The word was originally applied to the "Merry Month of May," which was indeed a pagan springtime festival filled with overeating, overdrinking, and overall debauchery. Jesus himself points out the foolishness of one whose purpose in life is to "eat, drink, and be merry." So, really, is "Merry" the most appropriate response to the birth of our savior? Just asking!

In the great scheme of things, the "Happy Holiday-Merry Christmas" debate isn't so important. What is important is that we know again the wonder and hope and love bound up in the manger of Bethlehem.

And at this season, I count myself blessed to have the honor to be your pastor, to work with you in ministry and mission in the name and power and love of Jesus Christ.

Blessed Christmas, everyone
Eric Lindblade