

What Does Christmas Means to Us?

Christmas Day © 2022 Rev. Linda M. Rhinehart Neas

I came upon this idea for our message today after hearing someone say, "What does Christmas mean, anyway?" I wasn't part of the conversation, so I simply pondered the question. I thought I would go check out what the theologians had to say, but their answers were lengthy, academic, and full of those twelve letter words that make my head spin.

After meditating on the question, it came to me to ask children for an answer. After all, Where would Christmas be without a child, a wee babe? I sent a message to my four daughters asking them to ask my twelve grandchildren, ages two ½ to sixteen the question – What does Christmas mean to you?

In short order, I had text messages from all four with their children's replies. Out of the mouths of babes! Their answers varied, but each was heartfelt and sincere. I would like to share them with you. (I will start with my oldest daughter's family and proceed to my youngest.)

Gwendolyn has three children. Levi (7) said, "because it is about family." Kaia (12) responded, "because we can all get together without conflict and share love," while her sister, Chloe (15) said, "because everyone is happy, and you get to see your family."

The youngest of Courtney's children, Dashiell (5) said, "because it is Jesus' birthday." Jaxon (9) replied, "because it is Christmas. Jesus was born." My oldest grandson, Liam (12) said, "because it is about Jesus being born." There appears to be a theme forming here! Makayla (15) went into a bit more detail, "because we are able to spend time with our family and friends and celebrate Jesus' birth together and remember how to be like him." And, Adelaide, my oldest granddaughter who will start college next year, responded with "because it is about remembering how the Savior and Redeemer came to earth in the humblest way. It is about how we have a perfect example to follow, knowing that a little baby born in

a manger took upon the sins of the world and died for all of us. Christmas time is trying to be like Christ in every way, every day, just like our perfect brother."

Elizabeth's oldest, Eleanor (5 going on 50) said, "because everyone is generous." My youngest granddaughter Madeleine (3) said, "dove ooh" which sounded a lot to me like "Love you," so I am going to run with that.

Finally, my Kathleen's boys gave answers that finished off my research into the question. Ronan (8) thought for a second, smiled, answered "because it is a jolly time," and then asked his mother if he got it right! Eric, (10) gave an answer that made this old grandmother's heart fill with joy. He said, "because you get to experience giving to others."

Musing all this and combining the answers together, I came up with the best answer to "What does Christmas mean to us?"

Christmas means that we celebrate the birth of a Holy child in a manger, not a palace, even though he was the Son of God. Christmas is when families and friends come together to remember Jesus' teachings of peace, love, and acceptance and then, go on to practice them. One of the best ways to practice what our sibling Jesus taught us is by generously giving to others, which always brings joy or "a jolly time" as my grandson put it. But most of all Christmas is about what our youngest grandchild share – Love. Love is the message of Christmas because it is the gift that we all can share daily in so many ways - Love of God, Love for the world and all who inhabit it, Love of family and friends and Love of our selves.

May these gifts of Christmas – Peace, Connection, Joy, and most of all Love be with you all today and throughout the year to come.
Amen