

What is this thing, anyway?

In 2010, at a backyard town-hall meeting in Albuquerque, NM, President Obama was asked, *“Why are you a Christian?”* The question came from a 42 year old teacher’s assistant, one of three “hot topics” she had to raise with the President.

“I’m a Christian by choice,” the president said. *“My family didn’t -- frankly, they weren’t folks who went to church every week. And my mother was one of the most spiritual people I knew, but she didn’t raise me in the church.”*

The president said he *“came to my Christian faith later in life and it was because the precepts of Jesus Christ spoke to me in terms of the kind of life that I would want to lead -- being my brothers’ and sisters’ keeper, treating others as they would treat me. And I think also understanding that Jesus Christ dying for my sins spoke to the humility we all have to have as human beings, that we’re sinful and we’re flawed and we make mistakes, and that we achieve salvation through the grace of God. But what we can do, as flawed as we are, is still see God in other people and do our best to help them find their own grace.”*

The president said *“that’s what I strive to do. That’s what I pray to do every day. I think my public service is part of that effort to express my Christian faith.”*

Hmm... personal choice... living according to Jesus’ precepts... each person finding “their own grace” ... is this actually Christianity?

It’s not new...

In 1927, President Calvin Coolidge, in his Christmas address to the nation, stated, *“Christmas is not a time or a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and good will, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas. If we think of these things, there will be born in us a Savior and over us will shine a star sending its gleam of hope to the world.”*

Hmm... The savior will be born in us if we’re people of good will?... the shining star will be over us?...Coolidge may have come close to depicting the “proper spirit” of the Christmas holiday, but is this actually Christianity?

The Real Deal

At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus coming to this Earth, and He was quite explicit about whom He was and why He was here; leaving nothing to the imagination. In addition, His followers spoke and wrote of His intentions in coming here to Earth. Might I remind you that His intentions were not that we would/could become followers of His by following any set of precepts, nor being people of good will. Jesus’ history is replete with people following precepts and having good will toward men, doing good deeds, being nice... which people are commanded by Jesus Himself, “Depart from me you workers of iniquity. I never knew you. (Mt7:21-23)”

We who name the name of Christ are admonished by Jesus and His Apostles, to hold jealously/zealously to - not a set of principles - but to the Truth. What is that Truth, anyway? Jesus said, *"I am the Truth!"*.

His Apostle Paul said, *"Faithful is this word, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners... (1Tim1:15)"*

Obeying the precepts as President Obama says, having good will and mercy like President Coolidge says, doing the good works and being nice like those in noted in Matthew chapter 7... none of these have the power to deal with the matter of sin; and the Christ Himself came "into the world" to deal with the matter of sin; and without dealing with matter of sin, there's no possibility of a relationship with God.

Ahh! There, I said it... relationship. Christianity is Christ; that's the Truth, pure and simple. We involve ourselves in Christianity to the degree to which we have a relationship with Christ, over the matter of sin. There's no other way in... not by good will or mercy, not by obeying precepts, not by doing good works, not by being nice... There's no other way in.

Our opening question was, "What is this thing, anyway?"

It is Christ. Come to know Him... in personal relationship, regarding the matter of sin. If you have not already, if you've been doing the good will thing, then ask Him to reveal Himself to you and in you. He will, you know. He said, "Look. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone opens up the door to me, I'll come in and dine with him and he with Me. (Rev3:20)"

What could be better than dinner with God?

Pastor