Whose birthday is it, anyway?, might be the question that focuses our heart on Advent as a season of spiritual preparation for the coming birth of the Lord Jesus Christ into our lives and into our world this year. For on some level we know there is much about Christmas and the way we celebrate it that has nothing to do with Jesus.

Now here is the spiritual point –if we focus on the Lord Jesus then the message of angels will be ours –Indeed, we will receive the good news and we will experience great joy. But if we focus on anything else we will experience the BAD NEWS of this world and the extreme opposite of JOY in our lives. Our scripture verse has the angel announcing to the shepherds the truth and it is that the birth of Jesus is GOOD NEWS of a GREAT JOY. “Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy..” (Luke 2: 10) Notice please it is NEWS and not HISTORY. It is not newsworthy that someone was born 2,000 years ago. That’s historical. That’s what the world wants to do with Jesus; consign Him to the dusty dustbin of history and keep Him in the faraway past. But that’s not Good News. Good News is that HE is born and reborn today; He is born and reborn into our world TODAY; He is born and reborn into our heart TODAY. And when His spiritual reality actually is reborn into our heart and lives TODAY then that is current and that is Good and it is News and it produces in us JOY. So to recap, we know whether or not we are really focusing on Jesus at Christmas when it comes afresh as Good News to us, when we experience HIM and His new birth currently in the here and now, and when we receive an inexpressible JOY right at the heart of our Christmas.

So is your Christmas going to be focused on JESUS and produce great JOY? Or is your Christmas going to be celebrated as the world celebrates it, without Jesus and without JOY??? Whose birthday is this anyway?

“I AM BLESSED, NOT STRESSED, BY THE BEST, NOTHING LESS!” I’d like this phrase, please, to be the watchword of our Christmas this year. So please repeat after me –“I am BLESSED, not STRESSED, by the BEST, nothing LESS.”

So you’re going to be super-busy this December. And you’re going to try to do too many things to celebrate the holidays. And your STRESS is going to rob you of the BLESS. Your know you’re focusing on the right thing when you feel BLESSED. You know you’re focusing on the wrong thing when you’re STRESSED. Repeat after me –“I AM BLESSED, NOT STRESSED, BY THE BEST, NOTHING LESS.” If decorating your house becomes stressful then decorating your house really isn’t about Christmas. If buying all those gifts becomes stressful then all those gifts really aren’t about Christmas. If having friends and family over stresses you out to the max then entertaining really isn’t about Christmas. If writing all those Christmas cards are stressing you out then those Christmas cards aren’t really about Christmas. They’re about something else. Something less. Its about the world and the way the world wants us to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace. Not the way GOD wants us to celebrate. God announces Christmas as a “good news of a great joy”.
Whose birthday is this, anyway? And why are we trying to celebrate it in a way that robs us of the JOY of the Savior’s birth?

Repeat after me –“I am blessed, not stressed, by the best, nothing less.” God has sent to us and our world the perfect Christmas gift, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. It is perfect. Jesus is priceless. When He dwells in our heart, our heart is no longer restless but it rests in HIM. When we focus on HIM it places every other priority in our life in its proper perspective and order. Jesus first, everything else second. He is the BEST gift of grace we have ever received or will ever receive. In Him is life and new life and abundant life and eternal life. In Him is Peace; all things hold together in Him. When He is present we possess the peace which passeth all understanding. We can have peace when all about us is contentious and giving way. We can have JOY when there is no logical reason for Joy. Even in the face of pain and loss and something which the world would judge to be terrible we may still have peace and joy and we may rejoice in Jesus. He is the BEST. So why do we settle for anything less? Why would we get to the end of December and not have experienced personally the Good News of a Great Joy in HIM?

Repeat after me –“I am blessed, not stressed, by the best, nothing less.” Focus on whose birthday it truly is and you can say that with conviction and in truth. And the opposite is also true –when you are not feeling blessed and you are feeling stressed then you are obviously focusing, not on the best, but on something less...

I always pick one TV commercial I hate each Christmas and this year it is a GMC truck commercial. A man takes his wife outside and shows her the TWO trucks he has purchased, one for her and one for himself. One is red and one is green. Get it? Red and Green --This must be what Christmas is truly about, according to General Motors. But the wife runs over and picks the green truck which is the one the man wanted for himself. But in a true moment of Christmas, he in a lovely and Christ-like sacrifice allows his wife to pick the truck she likes and he keeps the red one for himself, the one he really didn’t want. Man, that all says Christmas to me. Boy howdy, that sacrifice this man made is right up there with Jesus on the cross and the Son of God’s condescension in coming down to earth and being born in human form in a humble manger in Bethlehem. I’m sorry to say this; but what a complete and total perversion of Christmas that commercial represents. It has nothing to do with Jesus. Jesus is about good news of a great joy. The gift of Jesus Christ born alive in our heart propels us to say, “I am blessed, not stressed, by the best, nothing less.”

But you know, maybe I really do want you to pick the best gift for yourself this Christmas. Maybe I want you to come to the quiet by the manger’s side and bow down before the One born the Prince of Peace. Maybe I want you to come and receive HIM once again as the BEST Gift, the One who provides Blessing, not stressing. Maybe in the flickering of candlelight I want you to celebrate Christmas this year without a sign of stress. All is calm and bright when Jesus is born in our heart. Its GOOD NEWS, not Bad news. Its JOY, not stress. Pick Jesus. He’s the gift. Focus your heart on HIM. Celebrate HIS birth. Whose birthday is this, anyway? Come to this table and say, “I am blessed...” Amen and Amen.

By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, Pennsylvania

IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!