Whose birthday is it, anyway?” has been our theme in December this year. Our scripture from the Gospel according to Matthew begins –“Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way...” (Matthew 1: 14) And if we really want to know how Jesus is born the gospel writer answers it later on in the passage –“(Mary) will bear a son and you will call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (v. 21) AND “a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel, (which means God with us).” (v. 23) The Bible is extraordinarily clear how the birth came about and what Christmas is. It is about the birth of Jesus, He who is SALVATION and He who is the manifestation of “God with us” in our lives. But we tend to make Christmas about a whole bunch of other “stuff” that has nothing to do with how the birth of Jesus took place in this (particular) way. So help me with this. Every time I shout out the phrase, “Whose birthday is it, anyway?” I want you all to shout back to me – “JESUS’!” (Let’s try it, please. Thank you for indulging me!)

So there’s a lot going on in December, a lot of places you can go, places to go shopping, things to do and places to be; there are a lot of things you can watch on television, say, and none of them ever mention the name of Jesus. Oh, it may all be wrapped up in a bow, have Christmas trees aplenty, but it never, ever even obliquely mentions the name of JESUS. The birth of Jesus is all about his name. Jesus; it means salvation. Emmanuel –Jesus means “God with us”. SO WHOSE BIRTHDAY IS IT ANYWAY? JESUS!

So there are a lot of decorations we put up, and there are a lot of songs we sing, and there are a lot of things that we do and places we go in December. There are many family “traditions” we embrace. But if we really thought about it, how many of those things really have much to do with the birth of Jesus and how the Lord God chose to enter into our world? If we’re not coming to worship HIM on His birth on Christmas Eve maybe our priorities are backwards? Maybe we’re fooling ourselves that everything we do in December is about Christmas and about Jesus’ birth? Maybe we need to ask ourselves –SO WHOSE BIRTHDAY IS IT ANYWAY? JESUS!

The Wise Men came and they were bearing gifts to give to a newborn king. But we take that part of the story as permission to give to ourselves a whole bunch of extravagant gifts. Its HIS birthday, the Wise Men in the Bible story give HIM gifts, but we have twisted this to be a time of giving gifts to ourselves. Pretty sweet, huh? Its Jesus’ birthday but we get the gifts! SO WHOSE BIRTHDAY IS IT ANYWAY? JESUS! (Maybe we need to give Him the gift of our heart this Christmas and place Him first in our life??????)
I love Christmas cookies. I never met a Christmas cookie I didn’t like. I love all the chocolate and all the candy. I love all the pies and I love all the nutrolls. And I love all the cakes. Its Jesus’ birthday but we “take the cake”. Its His birth but Baby Jesus never gets a birthday cake. We give all the gooey goodies of Christmas to ourselves. SO WHOSE BIRTHDAY IS IT ANYWAY? JESUS!!!!! Exactly.

Our gifts are for HIM. Our hearts are for HIM. Our lives are for HIM. Our time is for HIM. We have come to worship HIM today, not anything else. We have come to place HIM first in our hearts, not anything else. BECAUSE WHOSE BIRTHDAY IS IT ANYWAY? JESUS!!!!!!! So how will YOU celebrate the birthday of Jesus that took place in this way? Amen and Amen.

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