

Smoky Mountain Reflections

May 2014

Words and phrases mean things and when we use them we should know what they mean. Just because I choose to say something with a particular word does not mean I can change the meaning of the word to suit my needs and desires. I will acknowledge that word usage and meanings can and do change over time but sadly some words are used today to force views on others to mean one thing for one group and a different thing for another. We as Christians should also be careful how we use and miss use words. So let's look at some words and see how they are commonly misused and how we might communicate more clearly by saying what we mean.

Let's start with the word tolerance according to Dictionary.com this word has many definitions but let's exclude its medical and technical definitions and focus on the second of three general definitions which is "***a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward opinions and practices that differ from one's own.***" We do not need to pick this definition apart let's just say one can be civil toward those whose opinions and practices are different than our own. This does not say or mean you must agree, just have a kind permissive attitude toward them. As a conservative biblical Christian these days we find a strong double standard applied to us when it comes to the word tolerance. We are called intolerant and judgmental of others when we stand with the clear teaching of God's word on the definition of family and the sanctity of human life. At the same time those who accuse us of being intolerant are at the very same time being very intolerant of us and our consciences with regard the authority of God's word. Now some of this is because some Christians try to judge others and tell them how they should act or what they should do. But that is not our call as Christians we are to be ready to give an answer for the hope we have in our hearts. This means that I as a forgiven sinner want others to know how great it is to be forgiven so I stand ready to tell others Christ died for our sins and in order to understand what sins are we must accept Gods definitions not make up our own. So if you find yourself being called an intolerant bigot, thank the person who says that to you letting them know how much you appreciate their tolerance of your convictions.

There are common words and phrases that we use as Christians that we should use with caution. You have probably herd me say before "**I am too blessed to be depressed**". this is a catchy phrase but it carries I think a dangerous assumption and that is that only happy well to do people are blessed. This is of course not what is meant by that, but consider that the next time you are sharing your struggles, pains, or anxieties in life, this is also a time to acknowledge that you are blessed, because God's blessing upon us are constant he is always there caring for us and working for our good even if we do not see it.

Another dangerous phrase is "**its a God thing**" not because something is not a God thing because He is in control of everything so everything is a God thing. Unfortunately we often use this not acknowledging that God is in control and it amazes us how He works through the things in our life to both discipline and care for us, but it is used only to recognize things that we feel are good and present outcomes on things. This again implies that in the bad things that we do not like are not also God things, those are God things as well because He is working through all things.

"**God placed on my heart**" is another phrase that implies special divine revelation when we know God reveals Himself through His word. When we have an idea or make a decision it is possible if not probable that God used our environment, our friends and our family and our prayer to help us come to a God pleasing idea or decision, but to say "God placed it on my heart" Implies divine authority behind the words we speak and unless we are proclaiming biblical truth what we say is our opinion not God's words.

There is one phrase however that I think we as Lutherans should never use because I feel it is based on a theology that is not biblical. The phrase is "**come to Jesus**". We as Christians do not come to faith in Christ the Holy Spirit plants faith in our hearts or when Gods word is preached and we hear and believe. Either way we are not coming to faith, Faith is coming to us.

Ok enough rambling with words about words.

Have a "blessed" (no matter how good or bad it is) :-) Spring

In Christ Pastor Portier