



My response to Michelle

Question number 1. "Why do they have a Buddhist and Christian blessing? Do the monks know? It doesn't make sense to me."

Yes the monks know. A key thing is that Buddhism has no God so they are not looking for the blessing of two Gods. I get asked because they are looking for the blessing of a God of whom they vaguely believe exists but really do not know much about.

An excellent comparison is the Unknown God of Act 17. Although with the people of Acts 17 they were covering all their bases, they had many Gods and in case there were more, which they did not know, they had the Unknown God. Here it is "We have no God, but we kinda feel like there must be one, no we're sure there is one and we don't know him, but George and Awn sure do..."

One reason they feel this way is I do not bless Christian style and the monks bless Buddhist style and thus a blessing from each religion. No. The monks give a blessing that is like positive thinking, positive affirmations and is more an incantation to bring good luck than a communication seeking the love of a person. I give a blessing in that I use the style, words, language and feel of Buddhism but rather than an incantation it is a communication with a person, God the Father of Jesus.

A great comparison in our Christian religion was the fad many years ago regarding the prayer of Jabez. Jabez's prayer is a fine prayer but people used it like an incantation, repeated over and over again like magic words.

More important than the words of Jabez is to be the character of Jabez and a love for the God of Jabez. Here is the Prayer: "And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, 'Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain.'"

As people are we like Jabez kept from doing evil and kept causing pain?

So it is not two Gods and it is not two religions. It is two very different blessings.

Question number 2. "Why Such a big deal? Are they Celebrities?"

No they are not celebrities. Community is a huge deal here unlike in the west.

People have moved into our neighborhood and have not done a house warming. But they tend to be reclusive. For example there is a single mom and her teenage daughter moved in about 2 months ago. They did nothing. And their house is across kitty corner from us.

Awn and I have never met them until the night of the party. After I spoke she and her daughter came up to Awn and I introduced themselves and asked me to bless them.

But a house warming party (we did one) is very valuable for "entering" the community life. Both the party and the process helps you engage and warm to the new people.

2 or 3 days before the party you go to every home visit about 15 to 30 minutes, chat, etc. but it is to invite them to the party. When they come, everyone gives a monetary gift, money in an envelope, and thus the cost is significantly reduced/shared by the community. And we volunteered to be the ones escorting the new family to every house.

Many of the community leaders, both leaders of position and those who are leaders in virtue of their Character help out. As a "character leader" I get to hubbub with all the other men and women of character and position. The new people over about 3 or four days of prep get to know the key people of the community. Our community is deeply affected by the kingdom of God and the new people cannot believe the warmth and love they receive. It is so fun.

Basically, what I shared was "It happened yesterday, it happened 2 days ago. It is happening right now about 3 miles from here. RAIN, pouring rain. But over our heads Clear Skies. Aren't we the lucky ones. A ritual is not what brings peace, joy and good luck to a home. What brings real and lasting peace and joy is Love. It is not wealth, skill, position, age, intelligence but it is love. We are all capable of love but too often our Love is damaged. We are scared to love. We have been hurt. But Love is powerful. In trouble we help one another, in grief (remember the artist died a few weeks ago? Noi, the wife is with us) we comfort one another, in sadness we cry together, and at a party like this we do not envy, but rejoice together, eat together, laugh together. Father of Jesus enter this home and provide peace to this family, but more importantly enter our hearts to put in the love we ourselves do not have. Enable us to be a community that loves one another not in words but in deeds. Satu"

A few notes, I take a little liberty in this English translation... Not 3 miles, 6 km. And a few others. Also it was actually this long, about 3 to 6 minutes in all.

Love is not thought about a lot in the lives of Thais but they love that I talk about it all the time. I use things like "the Father of Jesus" to help clarify with whom I am speaking, and Satu is the Buddhist Amen, sort of.

As I "articulated" my thoughts in response to Michelle's questions I felt it would be helpful to other laborers here trying to figure this all out as well as those who pray for us. I want to thank Michelle for Great questions. It is so helpful for me to think this through. You see you don't have to have all the answers, just some good questions.

