



## The Message of Holly

For this Christmas season, perhaps you wish to adorn your front door with *Ilex opaca*.

Or maybe you prefer the fancier *Ilex aquifolium* for the mantle in the living room, particularly to greet those guests coming for dinner.

Well, in case those nice-sounding Latin names are unfamiliar, and you are headed to the local garden center to get what you want, just ask for Christmas holly, and you will come home with the spiny green leaves and the bright red berries that have adorned wreaths and fireplaces for generations.

Across the centuries, red and green have been used as the two primary colors of Christmas. The shiny red holly berries and the bright green holly leaves are the perfect combination of the two most traditional colors

The small holly berries are thought to have originally reminded Christians of the drops of Christ's blood caused by the crown of thorns He wore on Calvary. The bright green leaves and all the evergreens used at Christmas speak of the never-ending life that the shedding of Christ's blood secured for all who believe in Him.

Even the sharp spines on the holly leaves remind us of what Jesus suffered on our behalf.

These properties of the holly declare the great truth of the importance of Christmas. Jesus was born in a stable, placed in a manger, and was worshiped by shepherds and wise men. But the rest of the story centered on the life that He lived and the sacrifice on the cross that He made – all for us, so that we might have eternal fellowship with Him in heaven.

And that certainly must not be lost on us at Christmastime.

*In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7).*

– Beecher Hunter