Celebrating Christmas

Celebrating Christmas. On that note, my mind goes back to a 'Jets and Canucks' game at the Pacific Coliseum in Vancouver just before Christmas 1990. Entering the arena we heard this wonderful song filling the arena: 'Joy To The World, the Lord is Come'. It was loud! It was thrilling! Listening to that carol and others before game time that night sent shivers up and down my spine. Imagine! Christ's birth was proclaimed to several thousand fans before the puck was dropped. Wow! Talk about celebrating Christmas! It made me want to shout: Glory to God in the Highest!

The night Jesus was born, heaven's angels filled the Bethlehem sky with joyful celebration. An angel messenger came to hand picked shepherds on a Judean hillside with Good News. We pick up the story in Luke: "And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings [news] of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" [Luke 2:9-20 njv] What a surprise! What joy! What an honour! Shepherds, not religious leaders, not kings, were the first to hear the Good News of Christ's birth. The Saviour, the Light and Life of the world, the Messiah, had come into the world full of grace and truth. How thrilling! So why celebrate Christmas? There are many reasons, but here are four.....

First: We celebrate because Jesus came to save us. "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." "And she [Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." [Matthew 1:21 nkj] **Second:** We celebrate because the Word became flesh. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and [Jesus; the Word incarnate, embodied] dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." [John 1:1,14 nkj] **Third:** We celebrate because the invisible God became visible. "He [God] appeared in a body....." [1 Timothy 3:16 niv] To Philip..."Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? [John 14:9 nkj] **Fourth:** We celebrate because Jesus is Immanuel. "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His Name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us. [Matthew 1:23 nkj] This is the Jesus the shepherds saw and got all excited about; the invisible God revealed in all His fulness in Christ, so we could actually see and touch Him. This causes believers in Christ around the world to rejoice and be glad.

We cram a lot into celebrating Christmas, but as you can see, it's more than trees, decorations, lights, carols, gifts, food, family and church gatherings. Christmas isn't about us, it's about the marvel of God's love and grace; it's about Jesus coming to die on the cross to save us from our sins and heal our hurts; to give us the gift of eternal life. It's about His coming to bring joy where there's sadness; peace where there's fear; hope where there's despair. While most may be in a festive mood, you may be sad and lonely due to the death of a loved one, illness, job loss, financial stress. I've been there and know a little of how you may feel. But if you're hurting you can trust Jesus to comfort you and see you through your present situation or crisis. The Lord can turn your up-side-down life right-side-up again—because He is God Almighty. Reason enough for celebrating? Oh, yes!

George Shaw