

## Christmas 2017

Dear Friends,

This past summer while visiting Ottawa, my family and I went to see the popular tourist attraction, the “Changing of the Guard” on Parliament Hill. We made sure that we were there early enough to get a good view and then, just before it started, we heard the sound of an approaching pipe band and soldiers who were going to participate in the ceremony. They were coming down the road behind us and, not surprisingly, many people left their spots to rush over and watch them go by. Then when the band had passed they came back to where they had been waiting but many of them had lost their coveted spots; they lost their good view of the main event because they had settled for something less.

Nine years ago, part of an article that appeared in the Toronto Star included the following observations:

“Santa Claus is coming down the chimneys of children who live in tents. Snowmen cavort on red wrapping paper in desert bazaars. Candy canes and tinsel adorn geegaws admired by Muslims and Hindus. ‘Christmas is becoming the first global consumer holiday’, says Professor Russell Belk of York University. ‘It’s secular and it is all about consumption’.”

While this was written almost a decade ago, it is still the same today and perhaps even more so. The ads start appearing right after Halloween (if not earlier!) and then it goes on from there; indeed before the end of November some radio stations are playing Christmas music non-stop. The Christmas Season takes over and dominates but how much of all of this activity is even remotely connected to the birth of Jesus? It is ironical that even as Christmas grows in popularity throughout the world, it is becoming ever increasingly divorced from its Christian roots, and this is a shame. When we take Christ out of Christmas, we are like those people on Parliament Hill this past summer, settling for something less than the “main event”. The slogan “Keep Christ in Christmas” has become a well-worn cliché but even so, it still rings true. If we keep focused on the true reason for this season, this special time of year will be so much more meaningful than it would be otherwise.

Wishing you a most blessed Christmas!

Shawn