



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Home For Christmas

Home for Christmas! It has both a nostalgic — and urgent — ring to it.

Home for Christmas! Business men and women, busy buying and selling, creating and convincing, clear the calendar. Making money is important, but at Christmas the world of commerce waits as real priorities emerge.

Home for Christmas! I write this aboard a jet airliner speeding south. My three oldest children have driven 30 hours, half-way across the nation, from their university. We join hundreds of thousands who are on the highways, in the airports, waiting in crowded bus and train stations, trying to make that mystical deadline.

Home for Christmas! Broken-hearted parents sit and wait, hoping the memories of past Christmases will stir the heart of a run-away child, bringing some word, any word, of their safety and love. And run-away children, some young,

others very old, sit in loneliness in far-away cities, contemplating, tempted to put aside their pride, their hurts, and on this special day, reach out for home.

Home for Christmas! Men on ships at sea, others serving on far-flung military outposts, some flying the lonely skies in constant defense of a nation which celebrates below, drop their tough exteriors and on this day give way to misty-eyed desire for mothers and dads, wives and children, hometowns and choirs singing "Silent Night."

Home for Christmas! For many, far too many, it is only a longing — an impossible yearning. In hospitals, fighting for their lives, some can only pray. Others, locked away in sanitariums, wish the world could understand that mental disease does not erase the mystical longings that cry out for love and home. In jails and prisons, men and women, black and white, lie on steel

cots toward concrete walls and with faces buried in the mildewed canvas of a lumpy pillow, cry away the day.

Home for Christmas! In nursing homes, neglected and forgotten by loved ones now busy with their own affairs, the grand people of this world reach out for any who might leave their comforts for that day, stopping by to say "God bless you, Old Timer." Even that cup of cold water seems blessed on the day when homesickness sweeps the world like an epidemic.

Home for Christmas! Jesus, lying in a bed of straw, was one of those who missed it. Yet, even in His infant heart, there was a longing. He had given it all up — the Home of Homes — to come to earth. But in His coming he instilled in us all a different kind of homesickness, so that even if we can't get "home," we know that one day, because of Him, we will.