

TITLE: "What's It Like To Be a Christian?"

TEXT: Isaiah 43:1b-3a (OT p. 672) and Mathew 10:29-31 (NT p. 11)

God says: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

Jesus says: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows."

Introduction – Welcome

WELCOME to those who are here for the first time this morning. This may be the first time you have been to a church, so this may be a new experience, kind of like going to a new school for the first time. Since you may not know, I want to describe what It's like to be a Christian. To do so, I will read what was written by 8-year-old Danny Dutton, who lives in Chula Vista , CA, who wrote this for his third grade homework assignment, which was to 'explain God.' I may make a few minor corrections.

'One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die, so there will be enough people to take care of things on earth. He doesn't make grownups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way he doesn't have to take up his valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.'

Christians believe that God created the earth and cares very deeply about our environment, about animals and about plants.

We believe that God knows each person and loves each of us more than any person can love us and even more than we can love ourselves.

As I read from the Bible earlier, if we believe in God, God promises to be with us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, forever and ever and ever.

According to Danny Dutton:

'God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times beside bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV because of this. Because he hears everything, there must be a terrible lot of noise in his ears, unless he has thought of a way to turn it off.'

God exists outside of time. That means that God can listen to each and every prayer as if it is the only prayer that is being said. God LONGS to hear from you. As I read earlier, Jesus tells us that our every hair is numbered. We can share anything with God and every concern of ours is important to God.

God knows the future. This does not mean that our future is determined by God. We are completely free to make our own choices in life. God just knows the future consequences of our choices.

If we learn to listen to God, God will guide us in the decisions we made. God wants the very best for each of us, and God will direct us to the best job, the perfect person to marry and where we are to live.

'God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting his time by going over your mom and dad's head asking for something they said you couldn't have.'

You can ask God for anything. God may say yes, God may say no or God may say wait. When I was 19, I needed a car and I found a red convertible Mustang that I REALLY wanted. I prayed about it and felt God tell me that I should wait. I bought it anyway. It had more problems than ANY car I have ever owned. Looking back, if I listened to God, I'm sure that God had a MUCH better car in mind, if I had just waited.

Danny Dutton goes on:

'Atheists are people who don't believe in God. I don't think there are any in Chula Vista ... At least there aren't any who come to our church.'

It is up to each and every person whether or not to believe in God and to follow God. However, the Bible is very clear about the fact that only those who believe in God, and who follow God, will go to heaven and live with God forever. Jesus says: "I am the way and the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14).

Danny writes:

'Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work, like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people who didn't want to learn about God.. They finally got tired of him preaching to them and they crucified him. But he was good and kind, like his father, and he told his father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said O.K.'

One of the things Jesus told us to do is to get together and remember his death on a cross. We are to do this by eating a piece of bread, which reminds us of Jesus' body and drink grape juice, which reminds us of Jesus' blood. Jesus told us to do this in remembrance of him.

We will be doing this later in the service and you are welcome to take a piece of bread and one of the small cups of juice as they come around. We hold them until everyone is served and then we eat the bread together and drink the juice together.

Danny says:

'You should always go to church on Sunday because it makes God happy, and if there's anybody you want to make happy, it's God! Don't skip church to do something you think will be more fun like going to the beach. This is wrong. And besides the sun doesn't come out at the beach until noon anyway.'

God DOES want us to go to church. Why? Because God is here in a special way. And God asks us to gather together, to give thanks for God's love and enjoy one another. And God has work for us to do as a group.

Let me tell you some of the things our youth are involved in.

Our youth group CARES about our world. They have raised money for Heifer International that provides animals that poor people all around the world can raise. They put on a Mardi Gras luncheon to raise funds to help the people of Haiti after the earthquake.

They had a Bake Out last fall to support Jayvee, a little girl who lives in the Philippines.

From primary school through high school, many are involved in the Dryden Go Green Program. This is a program that recycles food and containers in each school. Since May 7th, 2008 (a little less than 2 years), they have diverted 87 TONS (174,000 pounds) of food waste. This represents a savings in tipping fees paid by the district of \$5,046.

They have also recycled 7.6 tons (15,200 pounds) of mixed containers.

God CARES about the earth and our youth CARES about the earth.

Our youth group CARES about our community.

They have raised funds for the Dryden Kitchen Cupboard which feeds over 100 poor families in the Dryden area every month.

They have helped with the WEB program that feeds hungry school children on the weekends here in Dryden.

They have raised money and provided items to help at an area SPCA.

They collected clothing for poor children in the Dryden Primary School.

Our youth group CARES about our church.

They have done some amazingly creative services for our church family, such as they are doing this morning. Another service is planned, by the way, for June 13th!

Some people are worried about the future of our world, our country, our community and our church. I'm not. One of the reasons I have hope this morning is because of the teens in our youth group and other teens who are here this morning. You are amazing people and our church family is AMAZINGLY blessed, and very grateful, to have you.

Conclusion – That's why I believe in God Too

Danny says:

'If you don't believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can't go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It is good to know He's around you when you're scared, in the dark or when you can't swim and you get thrown into real deep water by big kids. But....you shouldn't just always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and he can take me back anytime he pleases. And...that's why I believe in God.'

Well, Danny, that's why I believe in God. And the dearest wish of God's heart is that you will believe in God, too.