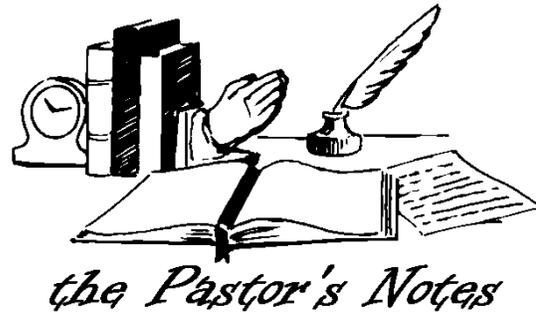


Best Seat in the House



A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to go to a Spikes baseball game with my daughter Sarah. Circumstances permitted us to get two seats in the third row just to the home side of home plate. We were closer to the action than the dugout. We had the best seats in the house. But it was the all round experience that made the game special.

There were two elementary age fans near us who made us laugh every time they danced the like the Spike dance. The crowd did the wave. You could hear the slap of the ball in the catcher's mitt and the crisp crack of the bat on the long ball. The Spikes won convincingly, and we had some dip-in-dots.

It was almost as though we were in the game. The only way to experience the game any deeper would have been to be on the field, standing under the lights and feeling the first of dew fall as it cools off, the smell to your glove, to run down a ball hit to the fence and snag it in the web of your glove, to feel the tingle up your arm when you connect on a solid hit or to slide head first into second on a stolen base. For most of us sports fans we either only remember such experiences from years gone by or dream of such an experience. But as sports fans the experience, however we encounter it, is what we come for.

The best part of this experience was getting to share the best seats in the house with my daughter. Seems to me that's what life is all about, what God's all about and what Christianity is all about---sharing the experience. Jesus said the most important commandment was to "love the Lord with all your heart, all your mind and all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself." I don't know how to say share the experience any better than that.

Many folks envision Christianity from the perspective of getting saved. All you need to do is get your "admit one" ticket into the big heavenly stadium. I find nothing in scripture that remotely portrays this. From the beginning God created man to live in relationship with him. God chose Abraham and established a covenant relationship through him to Israel and revealed the extent of the covenant to all people in Jesus.

If it was only about getting saved, I would suspect that Jesus would have called James and John to baptize them and sent them back fishing. But Jesus called them and us to follow Him, to share the experience of a saving relationship through Him with other disciples-- his church.

It's not about getting saved. It's more about living saved. The experience of living in relationship with God and other Christians is like the ballgame-- the more you can get involved in the action, the greater the effect on your life.

Yet I encounter folks all the time that say I believe in God, but I just don't see why I need to go to church. I can be a Christian right here on my own. James, the brother of Jesus, says, "*You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.*" (James 2:19)

The saving faith the bible talks about is a faith that is alive and active in which we participate, and experience the Lord in many ways including through other believers.

Christianity is not a spectator sport... it is a way of life. To experience the joy, love, comfort, patience, loving correction, gentleness, generosity of God you need to be in the game, active in relationship with the Lord and fellow Christians

To be a Christian all by yourself would be like going to a Spikes game in State College when they were playing in Williamsport. You might get it on the radio, but it wouldn't be the same.

We Christians need to become more and more involved in discipleship for a deeper living experience with the Lord. The Christian mission is disciple making for the transformation of the world. The disciple process involves four key areas, Worship, (Loving God); Nurture, (loving and caring for others); Equipping, (learning where and how the Lord wants you to participate in the community of believers); and Evangelization (inviting others into the experience).

If you're a Christian and involved in a worshiping congregation and enjoying the experience you need to tell others. Share this article with others. Invite them to join you. Tell them you have the best seats in the house.

If you profess to be a believer but don't participate in a worship congregation, or aren't sure what to believe, you need to get closer to the action for a deeper life giving experience. Please contact us or the person who shared this newsletter with you. Visit our web site. Call us for more information and join us for worship.

We're holding the best seat in the house for you!

Blessings,

Pastor Duane