

Last night my wife Nancy and I attended our two grandsons' high school ice hockey game. It was the last game of the regular season, and it was an important game. The league championship was on the line. We especially wanted to be there, since it was Josh's last regular season game – he's a senior and plans to go to college next year. His younger brother Ryan is also on the team as a freshman.

The game turned out to be a nail biter. Tied at 2-2 after regulation time ended, they went into overtime.

Since it was such an important contest, the crowd of spectators was larger than usual. It included a sizeable group of students from the opposing high school who had congregated at the one end of the rink, standing by the boards, and being very loud and boisterous during the game.

Unfortunately, our guys lost in overtime. Of course there was jubilation among the winning team's players and their fans, including the noisy students. Nothing wrong with that! However, as they headed toward the exit soon after the game ended, they walked by our section of the stands, shouting taunts at us. One student gave us "the finger".

As I reflected on this incident, I almost had to chuckle as I thought again of people who believe that human nature is basically good! People are basically good, and people are the hope of the world. Right!

The Bible has quite a different view. It says that we humans are a strange mix of good and evil. We have the capacity for incredible goodness – for stunning feats of heroism, amazing acts of compassion and unselfishness, memorable examples of self-sacrificing for the good of others. After all, we are made in the image of God.

However, there is a darker side to human nature. We are prone to evil, to be cruel and vindictive, to put ourselves at the center of life and to be chained to self-interest.

The Bible's term for this is "sin". That word "sin" is not in vogue today, and this Biblical view of human nature is simply dismissed by many. But I believe it is accurate and realistic in sizing up who we are.

Scripture also says that this blotch in human nature is caused by our rebellion against God – wanting to do our own thing and go our own way, without God. That is the root cause of the disharmony and dislocation we see in human relationships. We can't get along with others because we are out of sync with our Creator. We need help. We need to be rescued from the dark side of our human nature.

The Christian faith provides an answer for this dilemma. We have a gospel to share (the word "gospel" means "good news"). God forgives our sins through Christ and that Jesus saves us from having to live at the mercy of our own evil impulses and actions. Trusting Christ and inviting Him into our life changes us!

The message of the Christian gospel can be summed up in several verses of Scripture. Romans 3:23 says "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Not just some of us, but "all" of us. And Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death (not physical death, but spiritual death), but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus is God's gift to us to help us and heal us.

It was a great game last night, very entertaining, even though we were on the losing side. But for me it was also a practical reminder of what human nature can be like, and how we need help.

High school kids can get unruly and mean. (So can adults)! That's why they had a policeman on duty at the game! Several years ago one of the games got so out of hand that players and spectators physically attacked one another and a number of police officers had to be called in.

Thank God that we have been created in His image and have a potential for an incredible amount of goodness. But we are also evil, and need a Savior.