Why your life matters (chapel talk)

 Have you ever thought about how unlikely it was that you would ever come into existence? First off, the universe needed to be created. Then the earth needed to be created. The earth needed to be made in such a way that humans could survive on it. Even once that happened, think of all the connections that had to occur in order for you to be born. If your parents hadn’t given birth to you, you wouldn’t be here. If your grandparents never had your parents, your parents wouldn’t be here and so you wouldn’t be here. If your great-grandparents hadn’t had your grandparents, then your grandparents wouldn’t be here so your parents wouldn’t be here, and you wouldn’t be here. You get the idea. When you look at it this way, the odds of you ever being born were insanely low, making your existence a miracle. All this being said, it’s not the odds of our existence that truly make our lives important. It’s the fact that we were made in the image of our all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving God.

 This topic is important to me because I’ve struggled a lot with feeling like I’m not good enough or that my life doesn’t matter. When I was in sixth grade, my self-esteem was extremely low, and I thought no one liked me. For a while, I was seriously considering ending my life. Luckily, the worst of these thoughts didn’t last too long.

 A few weeks before I graduated from high school, I thought back to this horrible time in my life and the fact that if I’d killed myself back then, I’d have missed out on so much. While in high school, I dealt with some really hard situations, but also had a lot of fun and got to know some amazing classmates and teachers. I broke down in tears as I considered the fact that if I’d ended my life, I never would have met any of the people that I did or had any of the fun and/or meaningful experiences that I did. Instead, I’d be dead, and my family would still be grieving every day and wondering what on earth caused me to do something so stupid.

 Soon after I started college and had begun to grow a lot in my faith, something else hit me. If I’d ended my own life, that would have been the biggest insult I could have given God. He created me in his own image and has always had a plan for my life. If I’d ended my own life, I would have given our all-good and all-loving creator something worse than a huge slap in the face. Once I realized this, I felt awful for ever considering suicide. How could I ever turn down the wonderful gift of life that God gave me?

 As you all know, God is extremely powerful. He created the entire universe and everything in it. When you consider how huge the universe is, it’s easy to feel small and insignificant. Without knowing any better, it’d be easy to believe that our all-powerful God doesn’t care much about us. After all, we’re just one tiny part of an infinite universe and God is way bigger and more powerful than everything he created. You’d think he wouldn’t give us much thought.

 However, that is the exact opposite of what the Bible says. The Bible says God loves us. Not only does he love us. He loves us far more than anyone else does. Even a parent’s love for their child is nothing compared to God’s love. While there are lots of Bible verses which state that God loves us, one of the most well-known is probably John 3:16: “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, New Living Translation).

 God had no obligation to do anything other than to allow us to suffer the consequences for our sins. However, he wasn’t and still isn’t okay with all of his children suffering forever. That’s why he came to earth as Jesus in order to pay the price for us. Our all-powerful God came to earth as a helpless baby and lived a life of humility which ended in him getting beaten and nailed to a cross. At any point, he could have backed out. Even after he’d gotten nailed to the cross, he didn’t have to stay there. He could have gotten down easily. But he didn’t. He suffered all of that undeserved pain so that we could be saved. Luckily, Jesus dying once on the cross was enough for all of us to have the opportunity to be saved. If he had to, however, he would do it again. If Jesus had to get crucified once for each person alive, he would do so. That’s how much he loves us.

 There is nothing that blows my mind more about God than the fact that he loves us so much. There’s a song I love called “Arms that Hold the Universe.” The chorus of the song states “And the arms that hold the universe are holding you tonight. You can rest inside. It’s gonna be alright. And the voice that calmed the raging sea is calling you his child. So be still and know he’s in control. He will never let you go.” I find it so amazing that the creator of the universe doesn’t just know us. He considers us his sons and daughters. He always has and he always will.

 God didn’t create each of us just to do so. Like I said earlier, he made us with a purpose. Jeremiah 1:5 states “I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born, I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). This applies to all of us. Before any of us were born, God already had a plan for our lives. He knew what he wanted us to do. Some people may think we just came about by accident, but that’s not true. God doesn’t do things by accident. He made us because he wants us to do something great.

 Life can be really overwhelming sometimes. It’s easy to feel like it’s too hard or even not worth it. It’s also easy to feel bad about ourselves when we mess up. Whenever I fail at something or don’t do as well as I hoped, I feel bad. The thing is, God isn’t bothered by our imperfections. No matter how many times we sin, he’ll forgive us every time. As for our non-sinful mistakes, he doesn’t care about those. He doesn’t care if we get a less than ideal grade on a test or if we forget something. While he’s always happy to see us succeed, even our successes aren’t what make him love us so much. He loves us because we’re his children.

 Our lives matter because God says they do. They matter because he loves us deeply and has a plan for our lives. The things we have or haven’t done aren’t what give our lives value. Being famous or popular doesn’t make anyone important. The way others see us doesn’t matter. What does matter is that the creator of the universe says we’re wonderful and important. If God sees us this way, how can we ever doubt ourselves? If God says we’re good enough, how can we think we’re not? If he loves us, why should it matter if some people don’t like us? God knows us better than we know ourselves. He is even more aware than we are of our brokenness. Still, knowing our flaws hasn’t changed the way he sees us. If our flaws don’t bother him, why should they bother anyone?

 While it’s easy to say all this and to know that it’s true, believing this can be hard. Recently, I’ve struggled more than usual with thinking I’m not good enough. I’ve been noticing all my imperfections and have had a hard time recognizing and focusing on my good qualities. I’ve also had a lot of fear regarding what’s going to happen during my last two years of college, and more importantly, what’s going to happen after that. I’m not sure yet what I’m going to do after graduation and have had a hard time feeling excited about any of the possibilities.

 Despite all this, I know God has things figured out. He has a plan for my life even though it’s hard to understand what it is. He’ll make good things happen and will allow good to come out of the bad things. As for my flaws, he doesn’t worry about them like I do. In some cases, he might not even see them as flaws at all. For example, it’s easy to feel bad when you get a less than perfect grade on an assignment, especially if you know others did better than you. I often feel bad when I get a less than perfect grade, but don’t necessarily feel good even if I get a perfect score. The thing is, God never ever said you had to get straight A’s. It’s great to do well in school, but there’s no reason you have to be perfect. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that you need a certain GPA to get into Heaven. That’s because your grades don’t define you. You’re not defined by anything that you’re good or bad at. The only thing that defines you is God’s love for you and his plan for your life. And let’s face it: grades are a bunch of baloney anyways. I’m not saying they don’t matter, but if they were as important as people seem to think they are, the Bible would have talked about them somewhere.

 Life itself is a gift from God. As I said in the beginning, the odds of any of us coming into existence were extremely low. This in itself is a reason to cherish life and make the most out of it. It’s not something to throw away. Too many people don’t live long enough or barely have the chance to live at all. The fact that we’re here now is something to be infinitely grateful for. Just being alive is a wonderful thing. Sometimes it feels like there is nothing good going on or that life just isn’t worth it. It is worth it. How can such a rare gift which was given to us by God not be worth it? Even when it feels like life isn’t going well, remember that it’s a miracle for you to be alive in the first place. As bad as life can get at times, perhaps some of the hardest parts are actually part of God’s big plan for you and for the world.

 I hope this served as a reminder for you that God loves you deeply and has a big plan for your life. It may not always feel like this, but nothing will ever change the fact that you are the child of our all-powerful and all-loving creator. To God, our lives matter more than anything else. If the creator of the universe says we matter, no one can ever say we don’t. As Romans 8:31 states, “What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?” (Romans 8:31, New Living Translation) I hope that the next time you feel like you’re not good enough or that life is too hard, you’ll remember that God loves you just as you are and that he will always be there to guide you. Once again, you are good enough and your life is important because God says so. It doesn’t matter what Satan or anyone else tells you. God is always right.