

Creation

The observable universe is estimated to be 93 billion light years across with an estimated two trillion galaxies, with our own Milky Way galaxy being composed of billions of stars. The universe has an immensity, elegance, and fine-tuning that makes it difficult for the honest astrophysicist to deny the existence of God.

A human being's life begins when two individual cells combine with the genetic materials of a father and a mother combining to form a unique genome. From these two cells, trillions of molecular interactions occur through signaling molecules, enzymes, ion gradients, gene regulation networks, and molecular machinery that science does not fully understand. And this fails to include the mystery of the human soul and consciousness that indwells this material body. The biology of gestation is so intricate, ordered, and life-producing that it ought to inspire reverence and awe.

The cosmic expanses of the universe and the microscopic complexity of the cell both point to an intelligent design verifying Paul's words in Romans:

Romans 1:19–20 ESV

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Pastors have a calling to declare the glory of God in Word and Sacrament, but this cannot become a place of pride but must be one of humility. Pastors are creatures ordained to minister to other creatures. A pastor points his church members to Christ who is the bridge between heaven and hell, and between life and death, so a pastor must always have his mind centered on Christ, the perfect image of the invisible God, and remain balanced between the mysteries of the heavens and the mysteries of earth, the sacred miracle of birth and the sacred reverence of death, as must all Christians.

Psalm 8 provides a wonderful picture of this balance that emphasizes the exultation of God, the Creator of the universe, and the humble position of humanity, God's royal creature and crown jewel of creation.

The Purpose of the Psalm

This psalm begins with the words O Lord, our Lord. A

common introduction to a prayer for help. Yet the rest of the psalm does not give the sense of a prayer for help, yet it is. It is a prayer of help for the psalmist to be recentered on the majesty of the Creator to refocus his confidence on the one who creates all things! The one who humbles the strong through the weak and flips expectations on their head.

The purpose of the Psalm is a prayer for help in humility. And this is further revealed in the structure of the Psalm.

The Structure of the Psalm

Psalm 8 begins and ends with the outward wonder of the psalmist, and in the midst of the beauty of creation, the psalmist turns inward to acknowledge this mystery of humanity. What is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that you care for him? What is human!?

The psalmist does not attempt an answer, but he proclaims what God has decreed for humanity: to be stewards of God's creation as the crown of His creation. The Psalm begins with the worshippers eyes to the heavens followed by a humble turn inwards and returns again to a worshipful look outwards and upwards.

The Culture today

In contrast to the Psalmist's example, modernity is not composed of stargazers, and many of the stargazers that exist are on two extremes of the spectrum: either they spiritualize and worship nature, that is creation; or they look to the heavens to justify their meaninglessness of life. Either worshipping the beauty as misplaced worship, or misunderstanding their status in the face of the magnanimity of the universe.

Modernity is made up mostly of Me, Myself, and I. Instead of being starstruck by literal stars, we are immersed in a culture of entertainment and markets. We, as a society begin inward focused, then look outwards only to return inwards.

Instead of eyes to heaven, we have eyes turned inward upon ourselves.

Ignorance of Nature

And our modern world doesn't make it any easier to return our eyes outward. We have so much technology today that makes us feel powerful, knowledgeable, and globalized. Thanks to technology, we forget how powerless we are and how much we depend on God's providential hand in nature.

What is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man

that you care for him?

What is a human? And why does God care for us? Well, humans are the crown jewel of material creation! Created in the image of the one who created everything.

Looking to the heavens should humble us, but technological developments have blinded us to the majesty of God in the heavens. Because of ambient light, you are lucky to see even a single star at night, and a result of that is we stop looking to the heavens to recalibrate our hearts to the glory of God, and we become puffed up with pride.

What do I have to be so proud of to look inward to myself and see anything but a totally dependent creature? Some of you here may know what it means to practice dominion with the ability to toil the earth and reap a harvest, to raise cattle, butcher them and tan the hides for food and clothes, how to fish the rivers, or spin wool from shearing a sheep. But I don't know how to do any of that.

Without technology, I, like most people, would be lost. I am dependent on grocery stores to remain stocked for food and on electricity to perform most of my daily tasks. I am not unique. I am dependent, so why should I turn inward to see myself as godlike? Am I so ignorant of my human nature as a creature? Or am I so overconfident in the image of divinity in my human nature that I mistake the image for the actual thing? Humans are creatures, and humans are idol factories.

We see the likeness of God in ourselves and we mistake ourselves for gods.

Yet this would not be the case if we would return our eyes to heaven as the starting place instead of starting with ourselves.

Mankind is magnificent and sacred, but only because God has made us to be such.

As one scholar writes, “We are valuable because God values us and because God has commanded us to value creation”

As I have stepped into my call as the pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church, I echo the prayer of the Psalmist, crying YHWH our Lord! How majestic is your name on all the earth. Crying out to our Creator, I am reminded that I am creature.

When I was ordained, my father-in-law preached a message to forget not the Gospel, my pastor gave me the charge to keep it simple, and today, I add to these directions with a warning to forget not that you are merely a creature. God is Creator and Savior, and we must remind ourselves daily of the magnificence of who God is so that we never get wrapped up in how majestic the ever distracting “I” is. God is the Creator, and we are image-bearers of God, but we are not gods. Praise be to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit!