



Saint John United Methodist Church
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Message for February 2, 2020
"Faith and Science"
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: Psalm 19:1-6

The Heavens Declare the Glory of God

So we sung it just a couple of minutes ago, *"God of wonders, beyond our galaxy, you are holy, holy. The universe declares your majesty. You are holy, holy, holy."*

We are indebted to *Third Day* for giving the church such a wonderful song. I sing it and, at once, I can't help but think about the greatness of our Creator God.

We are also indebted to the Psalmist. He sets our sights to the heavens and in looking toward the heavens we see God in his splendor.

Psalm 39:1-6 *"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.*

Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth."

"The heavens declare the glory of the God." God is constantly, consistently making himself known. It's just a part of his nature. His glory is all around us. May we have the eyes of faith to see as he would have us see.

Where We've Been

We have spent the weeks of this New Year considering faith. I figured it would be a good thing to do as we began a new year.

After all, if you remember, my one word entering the New Year is faith. I do so resolve to live more faithfully.

The past few weeks we have talked about faith and assurance. *"Now faith is the conviction of things we hope for and the assurance of things not seen."* (Hebrews 11:1)

We've talked about faith and power. The disciples wondered aloud why they couldn't heal the demon-possessed boy. It's because you have *"so little faith,"* said Jesus.

"I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." (Matthew 17:20-21)

We've talked about faith and doubt. Borrowing from the same story we heard the boy's dad say, "*I believe, help me overcome my unbelief.*" (Mark 9:24)

And just last week we talked about the tension between faith and self-reliance. We did that against the backdrop of Paul grappling with his "*thorn in the flesh.*"

Laying his self-reliance aside, he had come to know the sufficiency of God's grace. "*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*" (II Corinthians 12:9)

Today, we take a somewhat different tack. We consider the relationship between faith and science. While some will argue that the two are mutually exclusive, I am not of that mind.

The Grieb's and Science

I have always enjoyed science. I did in school and have remained interested since. I am particularly smitten with the vastness of God's universe.

The great telescopes floating through space have opened up a whole new understanding of the universe. We are learning new things every day.

The rest of the Grieb's have an affinity for science as well.

Our youngest son, John is a biology teacher over at South. I tease that he is a "*Professor of the Biological Sciences.*" He is shaping young minds. John always has a tidbit or two to share and I soak them up every time.

Our oldest son, Brian, among other things has done his fair share of cancer research. I am not sure that boy is ever going to get out of school. I guess if he discovers the cure for cancer it would have been all worthwhile.

Cheryl sees the miracle of God's creation multiple times every day. She does perinatal ultrasounds. Who can't look on the miracle of birth and be struck by the creative power of God. While we know a lot from a scientific point of view about the birth of a baby, it's still a miracle every time.

Faith and Religion

Some view faith and religion as having their place, but the two should never mix.

Others see one informing the other. As I mentioned a couple of minutes ago I am squarely in that camp. For me, the more we learn from science gets us that much closer to God, the creator of all.

Francis Collins is the director of the Human Genome Project and publicly asserts his faith in God. Collins has this to say about such things, "*When something new is revealed about the human genome, I experience a feeling of awe at the realization that humanity now knows something God knew before.*"
Francis Collins

God's behind it all, say those with faith. He is Lord over both the infinitesimally small and the infinitely big.

Steven Hawking says this at the end of his best seller, *A Brief History of Time*, "*What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe.*" Steven Hawking

Even Hawking gives a nod to the *“Master Designer*

The debate rages though as to whether faith has anything at all to add to scientific discourse. I say it does.

- Advances with nuclear technology, if left unchecked, could lead to nothing more than greater and more powerful weapons. Religion can speak to that.
- Advances in medical research, particularly genetic research, can bring us to places we shouldn't be. Religion can speak to that.
- Advances in business, if left to themselves can leave the world's resources depleted. Religion can speak to that.

Science, on the other hand, can keep religion from careening off into the abyss of downright wrong thinking.

I like what Pope John Paul II says about such things, *“Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. Each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish.”* Pope John Paul II

I remember from *Disciple Bible Study* when talking about the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2 that it's all about asking the right questions.

Science tries to answer the questions of *“what”* and *“how.”* Faith is all about answering the questions of *“who”* and *“why.”*

I guess it all comes down to a matter of perspective and how you approach things.

It's All in How You Approach Things

Many are just like Doubting Thomas who had to see and feel and touch before he would ever believe. As we know from scripture, Jesus was more than happy to oblige him.

Others are able to accept right out of the gate and then look for the evidence of what they have already accepted as true.

There are essentially two type of reasoning—inductive and deductive.

Inductive reasoning is the stuff of the scientific method and as we said earlier in this series we are all steeped in it. We have been since 5th grade science class.

Like Thomas, we've got to see and feel and touch before we'll believe. So we look for proof and then and only then will we believe. Even still, somewhere along the line we'll have to take a leap of faith.

Others are comfortable taking a leap of faith right out of the gate and then with eyes of faith see the proof of what they have already decided to be true. This is deductive reasoning and is the stuff of religion.

The point is this, both types of reasoning demand some sort of faith response. I don't think scientists always realize that.

Even if you boiled water a thousand times and every time you found that it boiled at 100 degrees centigrade, you would still have to take a leap of faith to say that *"water boils at a 100 degrees centigrade."*

When it comes to the relationship between faith and science a lot of comes down to whether we're willing to take that leap of faith.

It Takes Faith

It takes faith to say that God exists.

It takes faith to say that God is the one behind it all.

My father in law took the stand when it came to creation that God did, in fact, create all that is.

Borrowing from Genesis 1:1, he'd say, *"In the beginning God created"* and he would stop right there. And then he would say, *"In the beginning God."*

It takes faith to say that God seeks to involve himself in the life of his creation in loving and grace-filled ways.

It takes faith.

Making All Things New

I love what it says in the Affirmation of Faith of the United Church in Canada. *"We are not alone. We live in God's world. We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit."*

I believe that God created as well. I also believe that he is still creating. The work of creation never stops.

That's borne out no more clearly than in that great passage found in II Corinthians 5:17, *"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"* (II Corinthians 5:17)

God continues to breathe life into those who seek to follow him.

When you and I look at how immense and vast God's universe is and we feel so very small in comparison, let's stop and think about the fact that even with all God has created, he still cares enough to send his Son so that we might be made over.

A Fascination with Science

Down through the centuries the church has always had a fascination with science. I guess there has always been the underlying thought that in pursuing the things of science we would see the things of God more clearly.

Way back in the Fourth Century A. D., Saint Augustine stated, *"We believe in order to understand and we understand in order to believe."* Saint Augustine

For the faithful, there is nothing to be afraid of when it comes to science. For the deeper we dig, the more we will know of Him.

"God of wonders, beyond our galaxy you are holy, holy. The universe declares your majesty. You are holy, holy. Lord of heaven and earth. Lord of heaven and earth."

A Divine Mystery

Any scientist will tell you there are all sorts of mysteries to this world and beyond.

We encounter one of them here. We find here at this table a mix of the deeply spiritual and the starkly mundane.

What's more mundane than a loaf of bread and a little juice? Yet Christ is present. And we ask ourselves, how can that be? We share with faith in that deep mystery.

Let's *"taste and see that the Lord is good."*