

Melanie Rosa  
Lakewood UMC

“Does God Exist?”

January 6, 2008

For some time now I have wanted to examine some of the hard questions people ask about religion, because I am convinced that God can stand up to our scrutiny, our toughest questions and our doubts. You can be a thoughtful, thinking person; a skeptical, questioning person, and still believe in God. You can take science seriously and take religion seriously, and incorporate both into your view of the world. But the foundational questions are these: With all of the vast knowledge and information that we have at our disposal today, is God necessary? Or is God obsolete? Friedrich Nietzsche thought so. Nietzsche believed God would become obsolete when human knowledge advanced enough to explain the origins of the universe. The more science explained, the less we would need God.

This morning I want to consider what we know about our world and the universe, and whether or not it points to the existence of God. Now scientists tell us that the most common theory of how the universe came into being is the Big Bang Theory. It holds that roughly 14 Billion years ago, the universe had its origins. There was a massive explosion, a Big Bang, and from that the universe came to be. To this day, galaxies are still being hurled through space, away from the epicenter of that explosion. The universe is expanding and evolving. I love the Big Bang theory, it makes sense to me, but it still seems a bit deficient in its explanation of how the universe got started. It seems to be missing an origin and an originator. Our solar system is a tiny speck in the Milky Way Galaxy, which is 150,000 light years across with 200 billion stars, and this galaxy itself is but a tiny speck in the greater universe. And the Big Bang theory tells us that this all came from nothing. Yet there is nothing else in the universe that came from nothing. Life doesn't come from nothing; a beautiful painting does not just appear. You don't see a magnificent building that just comes into being. It takes architects, designers, engineers, builders. Things are brought into being by a creator. There is a cause, something or someone who initiates the process. I believe this is God.

Let's move forward 10 billion years to the formation of the earth. About 4 or 5 billion years ago the earth was formed. Gasses in space began to coalesce around particles of dust, and the earth evolved from a gaseous state to a solid state. And water appeared, and an atmosphere that could sustain life. The earth was just the right distance from the sun so that life could be sustained. If our planet were just one foot either

direction from its current orbit, none of us would be here. If just 1% difference were made in our current atmospheric conditions, we would not be able to breathe. The earth is finely tuned, and is carefully designed from beginning to end. There is no planet in the solar system like the earth—it is totally unique in its ability to sustain life.

And among all of the many varied life forms we have on earth, none are quite as interesting as human beings. I believe we are all indebted to Charles Darwin and others who have helped us understand how human beings evolved. That does not diminish God at all, in my view. After the earth began to cool some single cell life forms evolved from amino acids. And these life forms came together into millions of cells and continued to develop and develop into many of the life forms we have today—plants, animals, protozoa, bacteria. Human beings evolved in a similar way. The Theory of Evolution makes sense, it really does, but in the end, I find something missing. Evolution explains how we have evolved, and thankfully we have evolved, but not about who or what started it all, who envisioned creatures in the image of their creator? Something or rather someone had to get this ball rolling in the first place. None of this can adequately explain the intricate and highly evolved forms of life we have today.

If I took some dirt from our garden and put it in a zip lock baggie, and I took a few other things from our Spice Cabinet and put it in the blender, how long would I have to mix it until it became a lap top computer? If I mixed it 100 years would it become a lap top? 1000 years? 5 billion years? No. Human beings are infinitely more complex than a lap top computer. We have millions of cells, differentiated in highly specialized ways. Our brains are complicated and intricate. We could never build something as complicated as a human being. It is hard for me to believe that all of this just happened. I believe there was an intelligent designer who was the architect, researcher, and engineer who had it in mind and made it all happen. Evolution makes sense when placed in light of a creator who set things in motion in the first place.

Then consider the inner workings of human beings. Why aren't we just like robots? Why do we feel love, compassion, gratitude? How did we ever develop an innate sense we have of right and wrong? Now admittedly some of that sense of right and wrong comes from society and our parents. We think it is proper to wear clothes; in fact we will be arrested if we don't. That is a cultural construct to which we all adhere and there are others that come from learned values. But in every human culture, on every

continent, there are certain values that are mutually agreed upon as right and wrong. There is a higher law that guides behavior around life and death, crime and punishment. If there is no higher law, then there is no protection for the weak, the injured, the wronged, and no justice for the abused. We cannot just steal whatever we want, do whatever we want, and that is true in every culture. These things come from a higher law. Without the higher moral law we would care only about ourselves and care nothing about others.

I could go on and on about the reasons why I believe the universe has a creator, who continues to be an immanent presence in our world. I believe in the existence of God because of the nature of the universe itself, and human beings themselves, which clearly point to a higher intelligence and purpose behind it all.

Besides, for as far back as human beings have been able to communicate, they have been longing for God. There are drawings and writings found on walls of caves that point to a belief in a divine spirit. This hunger for the divine is innate in all human beings. Every culture and civilization, have evidence of this connection to the divine. It all points to an experience of the sacred and spiritual, something within us and yet beyond us. You experience it when you see the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls, when you see a newborn baby, or when somebody dies. It is there within us all.

There are so many things I could tell you about why I believe God exists I would not be standing before you today without the grace of God. I believe in God with all my heart, in good times and in bad. The world does not make sense to me without God.

But, having said that I also need to say that there are some depictions of God that I do not believe in. I do not believe in the God presented by some of my fellow preachers who punishes people in order to teach them lessons. I do not believe in a God who favors some nations, political parties, candidates or football teams at the expense of others. I do not believe in a God who wants you to have a new car or a Caribbean Cruise, while children cry out for lack of bread. I do not believe in the God who some would tell us rewards some people with a multi million dollar income at the expense of the poor, the widows and orphans. I do not believe in such a God, and that is not the sort of God we find in Jesus. The God we find in Jesus is compassionate, just, and understanding. That God cares deeply about the forgotten and the suffering. That God longs for a relationship with every person created in God's image.

Bono is the lead singer for the rock band U2 and he is a marvelous Christian. He travels the world working on behalf of the poor and victims of AIDS, he has brought a lot of young people to Christ. But Bono was not always sure about God, he came to Christianity late in life because he struggled with Christians. He said, "I found Christians to be disinterested culturally and politically. I found it hard to relax with them, they seemed so strange to me. They all seemed so judgmental, judging others on the surface of things. While I grew up very suspicious of Christians, I was determined to know more about Jesus." His determination to know more about Jesus led him to a relationship with Jesus, and that relationship totally changed his life.

It is a relationship which can change your life too. It is not only about what happens in your mind, although that is important. It is also about what happens in your heart. Ultimately religious faith is a relationship of trust and hope.

So does God exist? You have to answer that question for yourself. Think about your life, your blessings, the world around us, and the miraculous things in the universe. Does God exist? Some of you here today might be skeptical and doubtful. Well you are in the right place, and we want to share this journey with you. Wanting to have faith is the first and most important step. God can withstand your questions and doubts. For those of you here today who DO believe in God, your life could be the only evidence others have of God's existence. Your life will either attract people to God, or repel them from God. Does God Exist? I selected some readings from Scripture which convince me the answer is YES. Psalm 19:1 "The Heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork." Isaiah 43:1-4: "Now says God who created you, Fear not, I have redeemed you and called you by name. You are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you, when you walk through fire you shall not be burned. I am your God, I created you, and you are precious in my sight and honored and I love you." And finally these words of the risen Christ to his disciples, from Matthew 28:20: "I am with you always, to the end of time, and beyond."

Let us pray: Everlasting God: You have created an awesome universe, and we are humbled by the wonder of your creation. You have given us life, and love, and blessings beyond our comprehension. Help us to trust in you, increase our faith, and help us live lives that attract others to you. Amen.