

“Is Anybody Out There?”

Job 38:1-7, 31-33; Psalm 8; Isaiah 40:26-31

Sermon Series: Star Search – In Search of the God Beyond the Galaxies

The Rev. Dr. Douglas C. Hoglund

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Ron and Frank are camping out in the desert. Suddenly, in the wee hours of the night, Ron awakes with a start and looks up at the countless stars. He rouses Frank from his sleep, points up and says, “Who did this?” Glimpsing the starry heavens, Frank says, “There are many theories my friend. Some say a Wise Creator places each star in the sky. Others argue it happened by accident and there is no one out there beyond the stars.” Then with a dramatic sweep of his hand toward the stars, Frank says, “My friend, what does this tell you?” Ron replies, “It tells me someone stole our tent.”

Have you ever lingered on a cloudless night under the canopy of heaven? Away from our blinding street lamps and neon marquees there is a celestial city with lights more numerous than any metropolis.

During my mission tour of India in 1999, I spent a few nights at a beautiful, retreat center with open-air verandas and lush courtyards. One night, I took a blanket and pillow and climbed stairs until I emerged onto the flat roof. Lying down in the darkness, I heard the dull hum of insects and caught the fragrance of nutmeg, cloves and cardamom. But it was the vast cosmos that captured my soul. I had a front row seat on the edge of eternity. I thought of my family on the other side of the world. At first they felt so far off. But now, staring into deep space, the miles which separated us melted away. I realized we are all just travelers on a tiny, twisting chip of rock in an endless universe.

Many fellow travelers look into the inky black of night and ask, “Who did this? Is anybody out there?” Does God stand behind the stars? These days there are plenty of doubters. Sigmund Freud remarked, “Religion is an illusion” God is a wish, a fairy tale. A Time Magazine cover once announced, “The God Gene: Does our DNA compel us to seek a higher power? Believe it or not, some scientists say yes.” Molecular biologist Dean Hamer of the National Cancer Institute claims to have found the gene which makes us believe in God. Dr. Hamer says,

I’m a believer that every thought we think and every feeling we feel is the result of activity in the brain. I think we’re a bunch of chemical reactions running around in a bag.¹

So is there a God outside our genes? Dr. Hamer says he’s agnostic – his findings don’t confirm or deny God’s existence. Notice, however, that Dr. Hamer says he is a believer. His religion is science. It takes a tremendous leap of faith to claim genetics, or any science, can explain all our thoughts, feelings and something as complex as faith. There will always be a limit to what science can uncover.

¹ Jeffrey Kluger, “Is God in Our Genes?” *Time*, October 25, 2004, p. 65.

St. Augustine takes a different approach. He says we are all created with a desire to know God. 1,600 years ago he prayed, “O Lord, You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.” Humans have a built in hunger for God which nothing else can fill. Augustine’s wild life of pleasure left him with pain and emptiness until he found Jesus ... or rather, until Jesus found him. There is Someone out there. The God who creates the galaxies is searching for you. Do you want to find Him?

The place to begin is by humbly confessing that **God is God and we are not**. You will never know how great God is until you realize how small you are. Job loses everything except his wife...and she is no blessing. His friends say God is punishing him for his sins. Job refuses to believe it. Finally he brings his case directly to God and demands an explanation. He puts the Almighty on trial and the Lord answers:

Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone – while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? Job 38:4-7

Then, pointing to the stars, the Lord asks,

Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion? Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons and lead out the Bear with its cubs? Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God’s dominion over the earth? Job 38:31-33

The tables are turned. Job instantly realizes he is not God’s equal. He suddenly becomes painfully aware of how small he is. The Lord does not owe him an explanation. He doesn’t owe us anything. We are only a tiny infinitesimal dot in His infinite creation.

I once heard a biologist on National Public Radio declare when we master the ability to clone humans we will be God. Not only is this idea foolish, it’s dangerous. We tiny humans will never evolve into God. When we try to play god, we inevitably unleash destructive forces we can’t stop. Adam and Eve wanted to be gods and that’s a mistake we keep making. God is God and we are not. Wisdom begins with the humble recognition of how small we are in His great creation.

After an evening of talk, President Theodore Roosevelt and a friend would go out on the lawn and search the skies for a faint patch of light beyond the lower left-hand corner of the Great Square of Pegasus. Then they would recite: “That is the Spiral Galaxy in Andromeda. It is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It consists of one billion suns, each larger than our sun.” Then Roosevelt would grin and say: “Now I think we are small enough! Let’s go to bed.”²

God is great and we are small. Yet that’s only the beginning of our search for God. Scripture also teaches us that **God is Sovereign and we are special**. Psalm 8 cries,

² William Beebe, Leadership, Vol. 1, no. 3.

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet Psalm 8:1, 3-6

When you realize how small we are in this massive universe, you may be driven to the opposite question: ‘Why, God, do you care about us?’ King David answers, ‘Though we are small, God does care for us. He made us a little lower than the angels. He appoints us the caretakers of His creation. He crowns us with glory, honor and majesty.’ We are special in His eyes. The Universe is not an accident. When we gaze at the wonder and order of God’s magnificent creation we see His guiding hand. Sir Isaac Newton, said,

This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being. This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all; and on account of his dominion he is worthy to be called Lord God.³

When I take my grandchildren to the Academy of Natural Sciences we often see, among the dinosaur bones, one of those charts of humanity evolving from primates. We start all hunched over with dragging knuckles and protruding brows. Finally, the last creature in the progression stands erect looking just like us. We conclude, “That is my family background. I’m just a little more evolved than other animals.” That’s all science can tell me. It may be true. But Scripture teaches me something science can’t: God made you and I a little lower than the angels. You are special and precious in His eyes.

Years ago a man purchased a Hummel Christmas plate for his wife for \$21.95. Recently the couple attended an auction and were surprised to see a Hummel Christmas plate like theirs sell for more than \$1,000. What caused this remarkable growth in value? Its substance and size were the same. It was not more beautiful. But it was in greater demand. The original mold had been broken. Now only a limited number of plates were available, with no opportunity for replacement. All of these factors caused its value to increase. So it is with us: there is only one mold per person and no opportunity for replacement.⁴ God is Sovereign and, in His eyes, you are special.

And finally, **God is Searching for You and In Him You Can Be Strong.** The people of Israel complained that God forgot them, that He does not care about them. But the prophet Isaiah points up to the stars and says,

Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the

³ Sir Isaac Newton, Christian History, no. 30.

⁴ C. William Pollard, The Soul of the Firm, Zondervan, c. 2000.

earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:26, 28-31

God knows every star by name. He never forgets to light each one. He is never too weary or tired to put each one in place. And if He able to do all that, He will not forget you. He is never too tired to help you. He will never give up on you. In fact, He is searching for you. Even the strongest and youngest among us get tired. But when you trust in the Lord, He lifts you up so you can walk, run and soar.

Allan Sandage knows more about the galaxies than nearly everyone on earth. He is celebrated as “the most influential astronomer” of the 20th century. A student of Edwin Hubble, Dr. Sandage played a key role for sixty years in unlocking the secrets of the Universe including its age and rate of expansion. He received the Crafoord Prize, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for astronomy. He had every reason to believe there is no God behind the galaxies and that’s what he thought for most of his life. Science, he felt, can explain the Universe without a Creator. The laws and equations of physics prove that.

Yet Allan Sandage had this nagging feeling when he gazed on the deep mysteries of space. While attending a science writer’s conference he was struck by the incredible complexity of the human body. It matched the enormous complexity he observed through his telescope. He wondered how all this could start and grow by pure chance. At the age of 50, in opposition to the views of many colleagues, “a door opened and I gradually went through it with a different view of things.” He felt deep remorse over past sin in his life and his difficulty in overcoming it. The promise of Grace he read in the Bible gave Sandage the strength to overcome his struggles. He completely embraced faith in Christ.

As he continued to explore the Universe and write scientific papers right up to his death in 2010, Sandage never saw any conflict between his faith and science. He argued, “It was my science that drove me to the conclusion that the world is much more complicated than can be explained by science. We can’t understand the universe in any clear way without the supernatural.”⁵

Scientists all over the world know Allan Sandage’s name. But here’s the Good News: God, who knows every star by name, knows your name. You are special to Him and, if you put your trust in Him, He will give strength.

Yes, there is Somebody out there.
But more importantly...is He in you?

⁵ Source: Keith Cooper, "Allan Sandage, 1926-2010," *Astronomy Now* (11-16-10); William Durbin, "Negotiating the Boundaries of Science and Religion: The Conversion of Allan Sandage" <https://reasons.org/explore/blogs/todays-new-reason-to-believe/personal-observations-on-allan-sandages-spiritual-journey>