

## Sermon 14 November 2021

### John 5:24-29

Last week I made the point that I cannot give you irrefutable proof that God exists but I can point to weighty evidence which itself points to the existence of God. One of those pieces of evidence is the beauty of creation.

I love this time of the year. We see God's creation bursting forth in all its glory. For the past two months our fruit trees have been covered in blossom and now plums, peaches are announcing their appearance. This week I can even see tiny avocados making an appearance. Roses are in bloom. Down on the farm lambs are frolicking, blissfully unaware of what the future holds for them – pride of place on our dinner table. It is certainly a lovely time of the year, but before I continue with the exploration of God's creation, let's just reflect on our reading.

This is another instance of Jesus making a claim to be the Messiah. He is the Son of God, he is the giver of life. I want to focus for a minute on one aspect of his claim. Jesus refers to the dead – *'Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God.'* I think it can be said that Jesus is using the word *dead* in two senses.

Firstly, he is using it literally. He is referring to resurrection and the fact that we will, hopefully, experience Jesus in the afterlife. Why do I say 'hopefully?' Because there is an element of judgment here. *'..all who hear his voice will come out – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.'* So Jesus is referring to those who enter heaven when the time comes – they (perhaps I might be permitted to use the inclusive pronoun 'we') will hear his voice.

Secondly, I believe he is using the word *dead* to refer to those who are spiritually dead. What does it mean to be spiritually dead? Quite simply, to be oblivious to the presence of God, to not even think about the possibility of God, to be blind to the existence of God, despite, what I believe, is some quite convincing evidence. And this is where creation come in. We can point to a myriad of things that I believe point to the veracity of God's existence. Creation is but one of them.

Let's have a look at this small dahlia. To most of us this is just a plant, albeit a beautiful plant, and we admire its beauty. But there is far more than just beauty to admire. It is actually a model of incredible design and functioning, beginning with a dry, extremely unattractive tuber. Then through a combination of temperature, light, carbon dioxide and water this thing of beauty emerges. The design of the plant is quite intricate. Minute veins carry water to all parts of the plant in order to nourish it. Everything has a function. Surely there has to be a hand in this.

There is so much to marvel at in this world of ours. From the physical beauty and the beauty of design and harmony, we then look at the vastness, the scale of our universe and it takes your breath away. Let me give you an example.

On the night of February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1987 an astronomer in Chile observed with his naked eye the explosion of a distant supernova, a blast so powerful that it released as much energy in one second as our sun will release in 10 billion years! That in itself is quite difficult to get one's head around, to put it mildly. But that's not all. Did that event truly occur on February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1987? Only from the perspective of our planet. In actual fact, the supernova exploded 170,000 years prior, but the light generated by that explosion, travelling almost 6 trillion miles a year, took 170,000 years to reach our galaxy. It defies all comprehension.

Surely there has to be something or someone far greater than us, far beyond our comprehension, behind all this. You really have to stop, look around and think. I believe that if we open our minds and our eyes, we can see God all around us. Paul makes this point in Romans 1:20. *'From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God.'*

I guess that says it all.

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