

Fil-Am Community Church

Pastor David Bennett

25 Sept 2011

God Quest Sermon 2

“The Beginning”

Key Text: Psalm 19:1-4

Good morning Fil-Am it is so good to see so many smiling faces here today, like we have said many times in the past every Sunday here at Fil-Am is like a family reunion. Today we are on Sermon number 2 in a series of 6 on “**Discovering the God Your Heart is Looking For.**” Last week Pastor Rolly spent time showing us that:

- (1) You can know that Truth Exists
- (2) You can know the Truth
- (3) And you can live in a relationship with the Truth

Today we are going to look at another aspect of this God Quest called “The Beginning”

Maybe you’ve noticed. I know that I certainly have. Atheism is more popular today than ever. At least, it seems that way, judging by bookstore shelves and TV talk shows and even advertisements on buses and subway trains.

Richard Dawkins’ book *The God Delusion* has sold two million copies.

Christopher Hitchens’ book *God Is Not Great*, and

Sam Harris’ *Letter to a Christian Nation* have become best sellers.

I could go on and on about author after author that continue to put out literature about the Death of God or a society with little to no need for God.

And there are others—people who not only call themselves atheists but are driven to convert others to their point of view. And they have had some success. They have persuaded many. In fact, many of our neighbors and co-workers, even friends and possibly family, to believe that modern science has disproven the very existence of God.

How can so many people be mistaken? Can smart, educated, best-selling authors be wrong? Can astronomers, physicists, and other scientists be missing the mark?

The Bible, of course, takes a different view than the so called authors above—as did some of the greatest scientific minds throughout human history. And that will be the topic of our quest this morning.

We are sharing together a series of studies from God’s Word, and the Bible, called **God Quest**. It is a multifaceted journey of discovery that we’ll be sharing the next five weeks in our worship, in small groups, as well as in the youth group, and in our individual lives as well.

Through it all, we are going to explore some of the **most important, most difficult, and most pressing** life questions:

- Can truth be known?
- Does God exist?
- Can we trust the Bible?
- Why is there evil and suffering?
- And more ...

And when it’s all over, I believe we’ll all be at a place we never knew we could get, **REGARDLESS** of where we may be starting from.

It is just like **IMPACT** class or any other lesson series we start here without the application you will never experience the change.

It is like sitting on the couch and putting in a workout video. You can watch it but it will not do you any good unless you decide to apply it to your life, in order to feel the change you have to get off the couch put your shoes on and get working. So just like that workout video we are talking about let’s get ready to make a change.

In the Book God Quest it says that God reveals himself to your mind, and that there are two vehicles that God uses to give you knowledge about himself.

- The Natural World
- And his written Word.

We will get into his written word in one of the next sermons so we will discuss the natural world today.

Belief in God for some is very easy, they just know he exists. Someone described it to me that you just know down deep in your knower that he exists. For others the idea that God exists is filled with problems.

According to the secular world **GOD** has to be **PROVED** in order to be believed. However there are many things in life we accept as real even though we can't prove them scientifically.

LOVE is an example of this. How do you scientifically prove that Love exists? You may not be able to prove it but you can **FEEL IT...**

You can see the effects of Love. It is the same with the **WIND**.

Can you see the wind?

The answer is “**NO**” you can't, but you can see the **EFFECTS** of the wind.

You can see its effects as it blows the leaves down the street.

Or the way its breeze feels on your face standing on the shore of the beach.

It's the same with God. You may say that you can't see God, (I still say you can) but you can see the effects of God; you can see and feel when God is present.

So let's get started. I'd like to ask you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Psalms and then to **Psalm 19**.

Psalm 19 is a psalm of David, an ancient Hebrew song written by the shepherd-king of Israel, that has been preserved, repeated, and enjoyed by the people of God for about three thousand years. The first four verses of Psalm 19 say this:

*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 display knowledge.
There is no speech or language
where their voice is not heard.
Their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world. —Psalm 19:1-4 (NIV)*

These verses—and others that we’ll discover in the next few moments—declare some profound truths that science has not disproven. In fact, I hope to show you that science not only confirms, it **AMPLIFIES** the startling truths found in King David’s words.

And the first of those truths is this:

1. I can see signs of God’s existence in creation.

I want you to notice how Psalm 19 starts out:

*The heavens declare the **Glory of God.***

David does not preface that statement; there’s no preamble. He provides no background or introduction. He simply sings, “The heavens declare the glory of God.” He does not try to establish the existence of God. He does not argue for it. He does not go about the task of convincing anyone.

I think that’s because for David the **existence of God is self-evident**. “Look up,” he would say. “The heavens make it mighty clear that God exists.” I think King David would have thought it silly for a man or woman to stand under the vast expanse of space, the starry stretches of the universe, and not see God’s existence written there like a signature on a letter.

The Bible is very clear it does not try and explain God it simply **ASSUMES GOD**. From the very beginning in **Genesis 1:1** says, “***In the beginning God...***”

Again, there is no preamble. No argument. No preface. Just “In the beginning God ...” This is not a sign of ignorance. **It is a revelation. It is an acknowledgment.**

As Paul, the great church planter of the first century would later write:

What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. —Romans 1:19–20 (NIV)

In other words, “I can see signs of God’s existence in creation. So can you. So should everyone.”

That anyone can look at the night sky or the ocean waves or a mountain's height or a Child's eyes and not see the signs of God's existence there is NOT an indication of God ... it is injustice of that person, of his lacks of insight, of her little faith, of their limited perspective.

Many of you may know who **George Washington Carver** was; he was the one who discovered everything that could be done with the peanut in the early 1900's. He had to testify before the Senate Agriculture Committee on the value of the peanut. George Washington Carver who was as an infant was traded for a broken down race horse, said he got his knowledge of peanuts from the Bible.

Asking what the Bible said about peanuts, he replied the Bible does not teach anything regarding the peanut, but it told me about God, and God told me about the peanut.

A Philosopher says where is God? And a Christian would respond where is He Not?

2. I can see signs of God's intelligence in creation.

When Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God," the word *glory* encompasses not only the beauty of God but also:

- His wisdom
- His knowledge
- His intelligence
- His skill
- His attention to detail
- His mathematical, scientific, and architectural precision

... All of which can be seen throughout creation and all of which should move us to wonder, amazement, awe ... and **FAITH**.

In the *God Quest* DVD curriculum, which many of us are exploring together in groups, journalist—and now pastor—Lee Strobel tells how science first led him away from believing in God ... but then as he investigated more carefully and saw the complexity of design in creation, he had a change of heart. He saw signs of intelligence, compelling evidence of design, in creation.

You see, some people believe that modern science has shattered all possibility of faith in a God who created this world, this universe. Nothing could be further from the truth. Modern science has actually given us MORE reasons to believe David's words in Psalm 19, *The heavens declare the glory of God*.

That phrase could be literally translated from the Hebrew, "The heavens *number out* the glory of the strong God" (Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*).

Whether we look from a distance at the glory of the heavens or see more than David ever dreamed through the Hubble telescope, the heavens *number out* the glory, the intelligence, of our designer God.

Let me just take one example mentioned in the novel *The Quest*, in which one character explains to another how not only our earth but our universe is "so finely tuned to support life that it obliterates the possibility that it is the result of random forces." He chooses the Big Bang, which many people mistakenly think disproves creation, as one of several examples. He says:

"The Big Bang, as it's called, had to be fine-tuned so precisely it boggles the mind. If I remember right, the precision had to be something like ten to the fifty-fifth power. That's ten followed by fifty-five zeros. ... What that means is, if the Big Bang had launched itself just a teensy bit faster, it would have expanded too fast to permit the formation of galaxies and solar systems and planets. If its initial speed had been just a tiny bit slower, gravity would have forced it to collapse back on itself. Either way, just a tiny bit less precise, and life would never have formed."

And that's just one example among many. As *God Quest* author Sean McDowell explains in the DVD-based Study:

The conditions of the universe are fine-tuned for the emergence and sustenance of human life. Just about everything about the basic structure of the universe is balanced on a razor's edge for life to exist. The universe is so exquisitely calibrated, the great scientist Sir Frederick Hoyle suggested a superintellect had moneyed with physics.

He goes on to say:

Oxford physicist Roger Penrose concluded that if we combined all the laws that must be fine-tuned, we couldn't even write that number in full, since it would require more zeroes than the number of elementary particles in the universe. Simply put, the first evidence for a designer is the fine-tuning of the universe, which is best explained by a cosmic fine-tuner—God.

And that, of course, is only the beginning, as we'll learn this week in our groups and in our readings.

A BEAUTIFUL ANALOGY!

A man went to a barbershop to have his hair cut and his beard trimmed. As the barber began to work, they began to have a good conversation. They talked about so many things and various subjects. When they eventually touched on the subject of God, the barber said: "I don't believe that God exists."

"Why do you say that?" asked the customer.

"Well, you just have to go out in the street to realize that God doesn't exist.

Tell me, if God exists, would there be so many sick people?

Would there be abandoned children? If God existed, there would be neither suffering nor pain. I can't imagine a loving God who would allow all of these things."

The customer thought for a moment, but didn't respond because he didn't want to start an argument.

The barber finished his job and the customer left the shop. Just after he left the barbershop, he saw a man in the street with long, stringy, dirty hair and an untrimmed beard. He looked dirty and unkempt.

The customer turned back and entered the barber shop again and he said to the barber: "You know what? Barbers do not exist."

"How can you say that?" asked the surprised barber.
 "I am here, and I am a barber. And I just worked on you!"

"No!" the customer exclaimed. "Barbers don't exist because if they did, there would be no people with dirty long hair and untrimmed beards, like that man outside."

"Ah, but barbers DO exist!" answered the barber.
 "What happens, is, people do not come to me."

"Exactly!"- affirmed the customer. "That's the point! God, too, DOES exist! What happens, is, people don't go to Him and do not look for Him. That's why there's so much pain and suffering in the world."

This leads into our third and final point for today;

3. I can see signs of God's care in creation.

The same David who wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God" wrote a similar lyric in Psalm 8. He said:

*O LORD, our Lord,
 how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

*You have set your glory
 above the heavens.
 From the lips of children and infants
 you have ordained praise
 because of your enemies,
 to silence the foe and the avenger.*

*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:
all flocks and herds,
and the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air,
and the fish of the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.*

*O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth! —Psalm 8:1–9 (NIV)*

The songwriter marveled at God's care, evident in creation. He created numberless stars, yet He created you and me too. He oversees the paths of planets and watches your steps too. He established His sovereignty over all but allows us to exercise dominion.

I will use one more illustration this morning;

At the University of Chicago Divinity School each year they have what is called "Baptist Day". It is a day when all the Baptists in the area are invited to the school because they want the Baptist dollars to keep coming in.

On this day each one is to bring a lunch to be eaten outdoors in a grassy picnic area. Every "Baptist Day" the school would invite one of the greatest minds to lecture in the theological education center.

One year they invited Dr. Paul Tillich. Dr. Tillich spoke for 2 ½ hours in the auditorium proving that the resurrection of Jesus was false. He quoted scholar after scholar and book after book. He concluded that since there was no such thing as the historical resurrection the religious tradition of the church was groundless, emotional mumbo-jumbo, because it was based on a relationship with a risen Jesus, who in fact, never rose from the dead in any literal sense. He then asked if there were any questions.

The crowd was silent until, an old, dark skinned preacher with a head of short-cropped, woolly white hair stood up in the back of the auditorium.

Docta Tillich, I got one question, he said as all eyes turned toward him. He reached into his sack lunch and pulled out an apple and began eating it.

“Docta Tillich (CRUNCH, MUNCH), My question is a simple question (CRUNCH, MUNCH). Now, I ain’t never read them books you read (CRUNCH, MUNCH) and I can’t recite the Scriptures in the original Greek (CRUNCH, MUNCH). I don’t know nothin’ about Niebuhr and Heidegger nor some of them other people you mentioned (CRUNCH, MUNCH)...” He finished the apple.

“All I wanna know is: This apple I just ate, was it bitter or sweet?”

Dr. Tillich paused for a moment and answered in exemplary scholarly fashion: I cannot possibly answer that question, for I haven’t tasted your apple.

The white-haired preacher dropped the core of his apple into his crumpled paper bag, looked up at Dr. Tillich and said calmly, “Neither have you tasted my Jesus.” The 1000 plus in attendance could not contain themselves. The auditorium erupted with applause and cheers.

Dr. Tillich thanked his audience and promptly left the platform.

Saints we see the enormity of our God shows the extent of His care for us. Think about this: the God who created the constellations, who plumbed the depths of the seas, who invented oxygen and molecules and DNA not only sees you, not only notices you, not only cares for you ...

This morning we have just touched the tip of the iceberg we have spent a little time discussing:

- Signs of God in Creation
- God’s Intelligence in Creation
- God’s Care in Creation

Saints God went to great lengths so you can **KNOW** He cares for you. He condescended all the way to the form of a human being like you to live as a man and die as a criminal,

So that one day you would know how great is His love for you ...
We know his love for us in **John 3:16-17.....**

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”

TODAY you have the chance to respond to that Love with gratitude and perhaps with a prayer of repentance unto **SALVATION**.

If you are here this morning as a sincere seeker after God, and if you can see in creation the evidence of a God who cares for you,

I invite you to reach out and find the object of your heart’s quest in Him. There may be many out there that don’t have that personal relationship with God or have for whatever reason put God on the shelf and would like to come to a better understanding **TODAY**, I am telling you now is the time....

I would ask you the same question that the same country preachers asked, have you **TASTED** of my Jesus?

There may be some under the sounding of my voice that just want to say pastor Dave I need you to pray with me, I hurting, I just need a little encouragement. I am telling you right up front is where you need to be..

I am asking the choir to come forward at this time and we are going to sing an all time favorite of mine, it is called the Old Rugged Cross. As we sing this song I am asking, in fact I am pleading with you to come and lay whatever burdens you have down at the foot of the cross.

Say, “Lord God, thank You for taking notice of me, out of all the vast and wonderful things You have created. I confess that I am a sinner, like everyone else here. I turn away from my sin and invite You into my heart and life.

I accept Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross as payment for all the wrong things I’ve done. I turn my life over to your control and ask You to come into my heart and take charge from now on. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

Now, if you’ve prayed that prayer, the Bible says you’re a totally new creation and a brand-new follower of Jesus Christ. I would welcome the opportunity to meet you and pray with you after this service. And for all of us, let’s pray together:

“Lord God, thank You for the truth of Your Word and the beauty and intricacy of Your creation. Help us—each one—to apply those words by showing forth your praise in what we do, in how we live, and in what we say. In Jesus’ name, amen.”