

## Life On Other Planets?

On Sunday we continued our sermon series on Faith and Science inspired by Dr. Francis Collins' best-selling book *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*.

1. Warm-up Question: If you encountered an alien from another planet, what's the first question you would want to ask them?
2. President Obama recently said, "There is footage and records of objects in the skies that we don't know exactly what they are." The U.S. government recently released an unclassified report describing 126 UFO sightings in the past two decades, many by U.S. military pilots, some caught on video. Pilots describe spinning tops that accelerate and change direction in ways that defy earthly technology. What do you make of all of these sightings? What do you think is the most likely explanation?
3. In 2020 NASA estimated that we have as many as 300 million habitable planets in our Milky Way Galaxy. But remember, our galaxy is just a small part of the universe. Within the known universe, there are 1,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars – that's one billion trillion stars. Most stars have planets.
  - a. Given the foregoing, what do you believe is the likelihood that there is intelligent life on other planets somewhere in the cosmos?
  - b. Although the Bible never directly addresses whether there's life on other planets, it does indicate that God created multiple levels of intelligent beings. Psalm 8:5 says, "You have made human beings a little lower than the angels and crowned them with your glory and honor." Also Ephesians 6:12 refers to "spiritual forces of evil in cosmic places." Why do you think God created angels? As best you understand it, how does their life form differ from ours?
  - c. Creation itself offers us oodles of examples of God's love for variety and diversity even within the various levels of creation. God didn't make just one kind of bird, but many. Not just one kind of flower, but many. No just one kind of humans, but many. Given this, Jeff said, "Do we really expect God's creativity ended at the edge of earth's atmosphere? Do we really believe God created one billion trillion stars – and even more planets – but then only created life on earth?" Can you think of any reasons why God might have chosen to create only one intelligent life form, i.e., humans? Can you think of reasons why God might have chosen to create many different intelligent life forms on many planets?
  - d. Sy Montgomery has written an award winning book called "The Soul of an Octopus." In a recent interview with Ezra Klein, she summarized some of what she's learned about octopuses. Read the excerpt on p. 3. Octopuses expand our imagination of how different intelligent life on other planets might be compared to us. Jeff suggested aliens from another planet might have multiple brains, hands that can taste, and the ability to jump 350 times the length of their bodies. Imagine encountering such a life form? What do you think you would feel?

4. Jeff suggested several insights we can gain from all of this. **Insight 1 – God clearly revels in diversity – and therefore so should we.** Of all people, people of faith should not be afraid of “alien life forms,” whether we’re talking about aliens from space or exotic people or creatures here on earth.
  - a. Why are we humans so apt to fear “alien life forms?”
  - b. Tell us about a person or creature you’ve encountered that, at first, you feared, but eventually came to love and appreciate. What made the difference?
  
5. **Insight 2 – We’re not at the center of it all; we’re part of something much bigger than ourselves.** We have a tendency to assume that “God so loved the world” means “God only loves the world” because it makes us feel special to think that we’re the only intelligent life in the cosmos. If instead God has created and loved many different alien civilizations, we may feel diminished. It’s kind of like going from being an only child to one of many children. Actually, though, learning that it’s not all about us is a critical spiritual lesson. Read Philippians 2:3-11, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. Look again at verses 3-5. What do you think these verses mean? Why is this such a critical lesson for spiritual living? Does living with a servant’s attitude diminish the quality of our life – why or why not?
  - b. Jeff said, “Life is not all about me. It’s not even all about us humans. It’s about all of creation – even animals, even nature, even mother earth, and someday maybe even other life forms out there.” Do the words of the verses discussed above (vss. 3-5) apply to our interactions with animals, nature, and the earth? Why or why not? How should we relate to animals, nature, and the earth?
  
6. Suppose someday we encounter intelligent life from another planet and their faith is different from ours, or they have no faith, or their faith is more developed than ours. Jeff suggested that, “Maybe there are things God will have said to them that we can benefit from. And surely there are things that God has said to us that they could benefit from.” **This is Insight 3 – We still have much to learn, but we also have much to share – especially the story of Jesus.**
  - a. I Corinthians 13:9 says, “We know only in part, and we prophesy only in part.” What do you think that means? How much of God’s truth do you think we know – most of it, half of it, or very little of it? Would you be open to learning more of God’s truth from an alien life form?
  - b. For all we don’t know, we do know “The Greatest Story Ever Told” – the story of Jesus. Imagine telling the story of Jesus to an alien who’d never heard it before. How might they react? Would it be relevant to them? If so, how?
  - c. Philippians 2:9-11 envisions a day when every creature in the cosmos will bend the knee and confess Jesus as Lord. What do you think that means? Will even alien life forms confess Jesus as Lord? Will they call him “Jesus” or by some other name? Does it matter? Did Jesus die on the cross for them too?

## Excerpt of Sy Montgomery talking to Ezra Klein about her book, *The Soul of an Octopus*

“One of the issues around octopus consciousness is that they seem to have essentially nine brains, not one. So this points to the possibility that they don’t have a single centralized self. The thing is, their arms almost have each its own brain. In fact, if someone came along and cut off one of the octopus’s arms, that arm can go around and do stuff, and do it effectively for a while – like, go out and even hunt and catch something successfully. Of course, it’s not connected to the rest of the organs on the octopus’s body, and it’s not any more connected to the central brain. But these arms appear to be able to make decisions on their own. And some of the arms appear to make different decisions than other arms. One scientist I read about suggested that octopuses may have some shy arms and some bold arms. So what does that feel like? You really, really wonder.”

### Philippians 2:3-11

<sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,

<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.