

The Wonder Of It All

1. Warm-up Question: Suppose you were offered a free ride as one of four civilian passengers on the next launch of a SpaceX spacecraft. This would give you the opportunity to orbit the earth for three days above the earth's atmosphere 360 miles high (beyond even the Space Station), with 360 degree panoramic views of earth and outer space. The spacecraft is controlled from earth and has no astronaut pilots – just four passengers. Would you accept the offer? Why or why not?
2. Sunday's Scripture was Psalm 8, a passage that marvels at the wonder of creation and invites us to consider how we should relate to creation. Psalm 8:1 declares, "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" Then the passage goes on to reference some of the wonders of the heavens and earth. Read Psalm 8:1-9 on p. 3.
 - a. What is one of the most amazing things you've ever seen in nature? (It can be a place or creature or natural phenomenon.)
 - b. In Psalm 8:3, King David says, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have set in place, what is humanity that you are mindful of us, and human beings that you care for us?" In the observable universe, scientists estimate there are at least 2 trillion galaxies and 200 billion trillion stars. Take a look at a recent Webb telescope photo of the Pillars of Creation still giving birth to new stars, as shown on p. 3. When you ponder all this, what thoughts or feelings arise within you?
 - c. It's not just the heavens above that fill us with wonder. Earth itself is full of the glory of God. On Sunday, Jeff described a 4,855 year old Bristle Cone Pine tree in California known as the Methuselah Tree. But we don't have to travel to a national park to revel in the beauty of nature. Of all the creatures God created, what's one that fills you with wonder?
 - d. Take a look at the slug pictured on p. 4. Why do you think God invested so much creativity and artistry into designing a mere slug?
3. When God was almost finished creating earth, for the finale God created us. Psalm 8:5 says, "You made [us humans] a little lower than the angels, and crowned [us] with glory." God gave us brain power that sets us apart from the rest of creation. Each human brain has 86 billion processing units called neurons, with 528,000 miles of nerve fibers, and enough memory capacity to store equivalent of 4 billion books.
 - a. What do you think the Bible means when it says God created us "a little lower than the angels and crowned us with glory?"
 - b. Psalm 8:6 says, "You have given [us] dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under [our] feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea." The Hebrew word for "dominion" is *mashal* [maw-SHALL], which comes from the root word for

“governor” and means to rule and reign. Why do you think God chose to give us so much power over earth and its creatures?

- c. When we hear the word “dominion” we tend to think of tyrants who dominate their subjects. But that’s not the biblical model for how we should rule. Jesus told us, “You know how the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over [their subjects], and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.” Matthew 20:24. Have you ever known someone who was a genuine “servant leader”? Describe them? What were the characteristics of their leadership style?
 - d. Generally speaking, how do you think we humans are doing in our role as caretakers of earth and its creatures? What letter grade would you give us?
 - e. In your view, what’s one of the most glaring examples of how we humans have breached our responsibility to take care of the earth and its creatures?
4. Jesus is our model for how higher level beings should interact with lower level beings. Jesus was/is divine. We are an infinitely lower level of being. The gap between us and Jesus’ level of being is at least as great as the gap between us humans and sparrows. Yet when we were in trouble, Jesus didn’t say, “Who cares? They’re just a bunch of sparrows.” Instead he gave up the glory of heaven, came down to us, and became one of us, so he could save us. Now he invites us to turn around and share that same grace with the earth and its creatures. Romans 8:21 says, “We know that the whole of creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. . . . Creation itself is [waiting to] be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.”
- a. What do you think it means to say creation is groaning?
 - b. What do you think it means to liberate creation from bondage to decay and bring it into the freedom and glory of the children of God?
 - c. Have you ever known someone who was a great model for what it means for us as children of God to care for creation and its creatures at a personal level? Tell us about them? What characteristics made them such an exemplar of creation care?
 - d. In your view, what’s one of the best examples of a time we humans working together lived up to our responsibility to take care of the earth and its creatures?
5. Take a look at the list on p. 4 of ways we can love God and God’s creation.
- a. What’s something on the list that you already routinely do?
 - b. What’s something feel called to add to your routine as an expression of love for God and God’s creation?

Remember: “No raindrop ever believes they are responsible for the flood.”

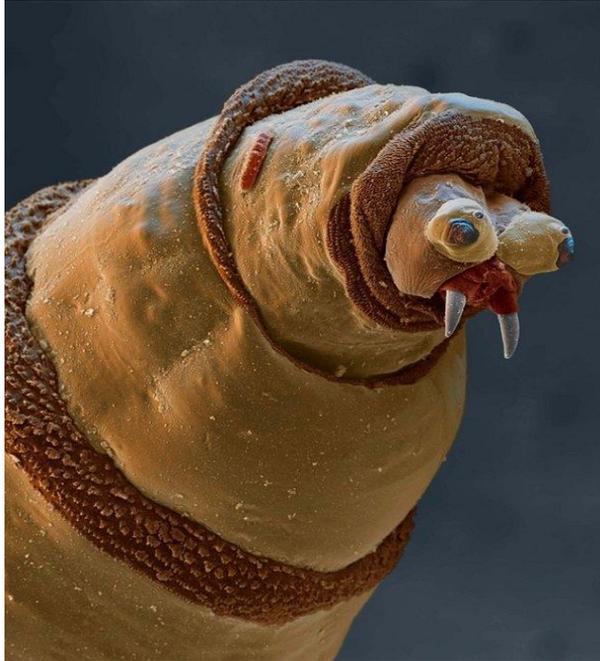
Psalm 8:1-9

O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! You have set Your glory above the heavens! ²Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger.

³When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, ⁴what is humanity that You are mindful of us, and human beings that you care for us? ⁵For You have made us a little lower than the angels, and crowned us with glory and honor.

⁶You have given us dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under our feet – ⁷All sheep and oxen, even the beasts of the field, ⁸the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, that pass through the paths of the seas. ⁹O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!





Sermon Supplement

Practical Steps We Can Take to Love God and God's Creation

"Be doers of the Word, and not merely hearers." James 1:22.

Don't be overwhelmed by the list below. None of us can do everything, but we all can do something. Go through the list and check off the things you're already doing. Then prayerfully consider: Are there one or two more things I feel called to add to my routine, as an expression of my love for God? If you feel so led, begin a new practice or two today!

- Recycle
- Be Car Conscious (buy electric or fuel efficient)
- Buy electric mowers and yard/home appliances
- Adopt rescued animals
- Plant a tree
- Reduce use of plastic, especially bags/bottles
- Support wildlife and conservation organizations
- Vote for creation-care candidates
- thermostats
- Buy humanely raised/sourced chicken/pork/beef/fish
- Turn down the heat, turn up the AC
- Avoid harmful yard/house chemicals
- Gently encourage others to do what they can
- Reduce size of your lawn
- Use less water
- Switch to LED lightbulbs
- Spay and neuter your pets
- Buy organic
- Eat more vegies and less red meat
- Never litter
- Install programmable
- Install solar panels
- Add insulation to your house
- Reduce food waste