

Look Up and See How Much You Matter to God

Colossians 1:15-20

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When my younger son Ryan was eleven years old, we woke up at 3:30 on a very cold winter morning. We dressed warmly and I prepared some hot chocolate. I found some old blankets and we drove over to our friends' house.

Jacob and his father David had invited us over to sit under the stars and watch the early morning sky. The experts had promised a meteor shower and we were not disappointed.

What we saw that night was more exciting than any fireworks show I've ever seen. Little streaks of light randomly raced across the night sky, several every minute. Occasionally, one left a tracer against the blackness of the sky like you might see from an anti-aircraft gun.

Once we saw a huge ball of fire in the sky unlike anything I had ever seen. The comet-like streak lasted for several seconds, no doubt caused by an asteroid.

"Look, Ryan, look!" I said as it raced through the sky. "I see it! I see it! It's going to crash into the earth!" he said.

We forgot that we were sacrificing sleep or sitting outside in the cold. We were having too much fun experiencing part of God's world.

When is the last time you have looked up and pondered the wonder and majesty of God's handiwork?

Some days the moon gets enough light from the sun that you can see it during the daytime. That has happened on two occasions recently when I was out for a walk with our 16-month-old granddaughter. I noticed the moon because she looked up in the sky and noticed it. Once she even pointed to it, as if to ask, "What is that thing up there in the sky?"

I hope she keeps looking up because there she will find more of the handiwork of God and begin to wonder, "Who made the moon and the stars?"

Psalm 147:4 says, "He (God) determines the number of stars and calls them by name."

You might know that God is still creating stars.

Many years ago, I spent time with a young man named Brian who is an amateur astronomer. He took his Celestron C8 telescope and we went out into a cow pasture on a dark night.

He pointed his telescope toward a constellation of stars called the Trifid Nebula.

Brian said that in the Trifid Nebula a star was being born and he showed me a picture he had taken with this telescope.

He also told me that stars also die. They can burn up and explode and he showed me another picture of a star that was burning up and dying.

Thousands of years ago, the Psalmist had no telescope, but every night he could see more stars than he could count. They all greeted him in a twinkling chorus that inspired him to write these words:

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day by 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 and the word to the ends of the earth." Ps. 19:1-3 (NIV)

Do you want some evidence that God is real? Do you want some evidence that God is holding the universe together? Then look up.

The Psalmist lived before the age of science, but he was right that these celestial creations speak one language that is understood all over the world. They give testimony to the glory of God, to the work of his hands because wherever you are, all you have to do is look up and the heavens testify to his glory.

The Bible teaches that God created the heavens and the earth. Matter is the stuff of the universe. Matter exists because of God. All of this stuff didn't create itself. An intelligent design must have an intelligent designer.

More important than God creating matter is that we matter to God.

If we didn't matter it wouldn't matter whether God created matter or not.

But we matter. Did you get that?

Now I want to show you just how much we matter by teaching you some awesome things about God and us.

- 1) God is a Spirit. (John 4:23) As a Spirit, God is invisible. You cannot see God or touch God. God is like the wind. You cannot see the wind or touch the wind but you can feel the wind and know the wind to real.
- 2) God is too big to fully know or comprehend. We know a lot about God but we can never know everything about God. God is like space in that God has no beginning or ending. There is a way in Greek to say that. God is the Alpha (the beginning) and the Omega, or the ending.
- 3) Our best understanding of God is Jesus. Once, God put on flesh. There is a big word for that. That word is "incarnation." The book of John says that "In the fullness of time, the Word

became flesh and dwelt among us,” (John 1:14) That happened in Israel, when a baby was born to a virgin named Mary and to Joseph her husband.

4) God came to us through Jesus to show us how much we matter to Him. God wanted to show His love to us through a human being. So the Spirit of God, that was once invisible to us, became visible to us through Jesus.

How many of you have ever been camping in a tent? One of the things you put over a tent is a rainfly. Even if it does not rain, the rainfly is important because many mornings there is heavy dew that appears.

Where does this dew come from? The dew is present in the air the entire time. It is just not visible. However, as the surface cools from the heat, the moisture from the air condenses faster than it can evaporate and it forms a dew. So the moisture that was invisible in the air, becomes visible on the ground or on the rainfly of your tent in the early morning and forms the dew. In the winter, we call it frost.

When Jesus came to us in human form, his Spirit had been with us ever since the beginning of time.

His Spirit was here; it just was not visible.

Genesis 1:2 says that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

When Mary’s water broke, and Jesus came into the world, for the first time, we could see the face of God.

We know that this Spirit of God was Jesus because in Colossians, the Apostle Paul says.

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶ for in ^hhim all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him” (Colossians 1:15-16).

So when you look up at the heavens and see the stars and the moon, the same moon that little Mia is already noticing, you are seeing the work of Christ himself.

Now take just a moment. Look at the person to your right. Look at the person to your left. These people are the handiwork of Christ as well. So don’t be making fun of the handiwork of Christ.

When you look in the mirror, you need to remember that you are the handiwork of Christ.

Sometimes, most of us have wondered whether we really matter. The Psalmist felt that way, too.

Once when the Psalmist looked up at the night sky and saw the work of God’s fingers, the moon and the stars that God had set in place, he asked God, “What do we matter? Why should you

even think or care about us?”

Then it was revealed to him that out of all of God’s creations, God made us just a little lower than himself, and crowned us with glory and honor. God placed us in charge of everything he had made. (Psalm 8)

Wow! What an awesome responsibility we have to take care of God’s world – the earth, the animals, and the people.

So when you look up and see the stars and the moon, you ought to think about Christ, because everything that was made was made through him.

When you look down you ought to think about the huge job we have of taking care of the earth.

When you look around you ought to think about the people we are supposed to be loving and serving.

When you at yourself, you ought to remember how much you matter to God.

How much do you matter to God?

To find out you need to direct your attention to a hill in Jerusalem called Golgotha. That is where Jesus was crucified.

Too many people were beginning to follow Jesus and he was a threat to both the religious leaders and in a small way to the Romans. His message of love, sacrifice, forgiveness, gentleness, self-control, grace, and inclusiveness threatened to take away their power.

As God in the flesh, Jesus had the power to avoid suffering and avoid being killed. The Bible says he could have called “ten thousand angels.” But he walked through suffering and death because we matter.

Whenever we disobey God, we separate ourselves from God. In Bible school the children sang, “Sin Messed Everything Up.” The Apostle Paul teaches that even though we separate ourselves from God by thinking and doing things that are evil, we still matter to God.

Through his death on the cross, Christ accepted our guilt upon himself. Jesus accepted the punishment for our sins upon himself. Beyond that, Jesus wanted to demonstrate that death had no claims on him or those who place their trust in him.

Through his resurrection from the dead, Christ demonstrated that He has the power to intercede for us because if he could defeat death, he could prove that nothing had any power over him. If we place our faith in him then Jesus can assure us that nothing, not even death can have victory over us!

Christians have the confidence that Christ is God because death did not hold him in the grave. Otherwise, our faith is meaningless.

When you look up at and see the cross, you should remember that of all the matter God created, you matter most to God.

This is the reason John wrote: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 NIV

Unfortunately, a lot of people are perishing. Why are they perishing? They are perishing because they are looking in all the wrong places for answers to life's problems. They look to other religions. They believe they can get to heaven by being a good person or living out what their religion tells them to do.

Some people look to pleasure, wealth, science, work, relationships, drugs, hobbies, education, and accomplishments to fill the void in their lives.

A lot of people are experiencing the same fate of the bumblebee, which is now on the endangered species list for the first time.

Someone has noticed that the bumblebee never looks up. If you drop one in an open glass tumbler, it never sees the means of escape at the top. It just persists in trying to find some way out through the sides.

Too many people are like that bee. They never look up.

They never look up like the Psalmist did thousands of years ago and recognize that God created all that matters.

They never look up and begin a journey of faith like the Wise Men did 2000 years ago when they followed a star that led them to Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God.

They never look up at the cross of Jesus like the thief next to him who asked Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom or the Roman centurion who watched him die and said, "Surely, this was a righteous man."

They never look up and see the resurrected Lord and realize that the same Spirit that hovered over the waters in the beginning is the same Spirit that knows their name and fill their hearts of the assurance of God's presence.

This morning, the same Spirit of God that hovered over the waters in the beginning may be speaking to you. The same Spirit that urged the thief to ask Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom may be speaking to you. The same Jesus who came to the Apostle Paul and spoke to him on the road to Damascus may be speaking to you. That's God. God is saying that you matter.

Allow God into your life. Pray a prayer like this:

God, I believe you made the heavens and the earth and I believe you made me. I believe I matter to you. I don't pretend to have all the answers about you, but I understand that's O.K. because you are too big for me to know all about you. But I do know that you know everything about me. Thank you that you still love me even though I make a lot of mistakes. Thank you for suffering on the cross and taking my sins upon yourself. Thank you for defeating death and giving me the assurance that I can also live with you in heaven one day. Give me the presence of your Spirit, who will be a guarantee of my relationship with you. Help me to have a faith that is firm and does not drift away from your teachings. I trust you as my Savior. Amen.

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