

"Thanks for Nothing"

BY DAVID POSEY

That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring— not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Romans 4:16-17

Theologians call this “creation ex nihilo” – “out of nothing.”

A dear friend of mine and a beloved gospel preacher, Ken Sterling, was telling me once about a sermon he preached in which he canvassed the Bible and found the word “nothing” and preached on some of the stories and incidents that use that concept.

I didn’t have Ken’s sermon, but I liked the idea, so I created my own sermon by that title, “Nothing” and preached it. Of course, when I was greeting people afterwards they were saying, almost to a man, “thanks for nothing,” ha ha...

But the concept is crucial. God spoke it all into existence from nothing. Psalm 33:6, *By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.*

But, what is “nothing”?? It’s nothing. Well, I guess it’s what some kids do in school. Ask your teenager, “what did you do in school today,” the answer is almost always the same: “Nuthin.” But there’s a difference between “nuthin” and “nothing.” God created everything we see, hear, touch and smell out of nothing. Even air is something, even though you can’t see it; but God created out of nothing. That’s just amazing!

Sir Isaac Newton once had an exact replica of the solar system made in miniature. At its center was a large golden ball representing the sun and revolving around it were the smaller planets on the end of rods of varying lengths. They were geared together by cogs and belts to make them move around the sun in perfect harmony.

As the story goes (and it may be apocryphal) an agnostic friend came into his study while Newton was examining the model. Marveling at the device, he said, “What an amazing, exquisite thing! Who made this for you?” Newton, without looking up, simply said, “Nobody.” “Nobody?” his friend asked. “That’s what I said, Nobody. All of these balls and cogs and belts and gears just happened to come together and, wonder of wonders, by chance they began revolving in their set orbits — and with perfect timing.” His friend got the point.

Newton once said, “In the absence of any other proof, the thumb alone would convince me of God’s existence.”

What does it matter?

Read Hebrews 11:3 and 11:6:

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Since we can't please God without faith and since faith "understands" that God created the world, then creation is faith's first fact. That is, if you don't believe that God created the world out of nothing, you don't have faith — at least not Hebrews 11 faith.

Can you see why the theory of evolution is a tool of the devil? It exalts science and scientists over God. More accurately, it makes chance a god, and removes the Creator from the picture entirely.

What about theistic evolution? That's the idea that God made the world, but used evolution to do it? The Bible says, in very clear language that God did this in six days and that he spoke the world into existence and then, on the seventh day, He rested.

I don't know exactly how old the world is... don't really care. The Bible doesn't open by talking about creation to satisfy my curiosity and it is not a scientific text book. It opens the way it does, in Genesis 1:1, to impress upon our minds that the God we serve is a powerful God, a God to be feared and held in awe, who holds every breath in His hand, and has set everything in motion and can bring everything to a halt — with a word. Therefore, *The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." Psalm 14:1*

This is where the story must begin. In fact, the story can't go on until this foundational fact is established in our minds and hearts. Those who embrace the story and are saved are those who have come to the conclusion — and it is a conclusion based on faith — that the God they serve is a powerful God, almighty God, worthy of all glory, honor and praise.

And that's an appropriate way to begin our prayers to God: with a salutation of adoration, recognizing His majesty, speaking to Him with utter reverence, with our head bowed low, in total humility. Yes, He is our Father and we should be confident and bold when we come before him, but we must never, ever mistake that kindness of God for permission to treat Him as an equal or to command Him as if He is ours to command.

When we speak about godly things, we must speak "as the very utterance of God" (1 Peter 4:11). We have no other option.

For sure, if God should appear to you, you would fall at His feet like a dead man — as John did when Jesus appeared to him on the Isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:17).

God's Rights

There is so much talk these days about “our rights” — the right to free speech, the right to bear arms; gay rights, women’s rights, (some) minority rights. But when does anyone ever talk about God’s rights?

God has a right to our adoration and praise. He has a right to it and He expects it.

I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other... Isaiah 42:8

What can we offer Him? Psalm 116:12-14,

What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord, I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

In Hebrews 13:15, the writer says,

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

What to Do

I try my best to be practical in my articles and sermons – to leave you with something to do as a result of what we’ve talked about. What should you be doing as a result of what we’re talking about in this article? Really only one thing – cultivate a greater appreciation for our God. Be more careful about giving Him the glory in all things.

But, what does that mean? What is “glory”?

In the Hebrew Old Testament, the word is kabod. The primary meaning is “weight and substance.” A man of wealth would be referred to as kabod – a man of substance. His wealth and dignity commanded respect and honor — kabod. So, weight, substance, wealth, dignity, noble bearing and honor are all part of the meaning. Later, the concept of brightness or luminance was added (see I Corinthians 15:41).

If we really understand the honor and glory that is due God, then we will be careful when we talk about “what God thinks” or “what God wants.” We will prove (test) every word by His word. Ideally, we live every moment by considering His will first. We will “think” before we speak or act, knowing that God’s glory (in the eyes of others) is at stake.

Romans 12:1-2 comes immediately to mind:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

And then there’s this,

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. I Corinthians 10:31

And this,

Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. Romans 15:7

And many more that tell us how to glorify God in the every day.

Conclusion

Those who understand this principle – that God deserves all the glory – don't go around adding empty phrases like "praise the Lord" to the end of their sentences; they don't reduce God to a glorified ATM machine by talking about how God is working in their lives in every little particular (God got me this house, God got me this job, God did this FOR ME, God did that FOR ME). That is man-focused, me-focused language and does not honor God. And they certainly never, ever say "Oh my...[you-know-what]."

People who glorify God are God-centered; they are acutely aware of their inadequacies; they are the ones who most appreciate the absolute authority of God in religion; they are the most humble people in the world. These are our brothers and sisters who stand in awe of El Shaddai, the almighty God who, even though He has power to kill and destroy sinners — and we are all sinners — in an instant, He is willing to reach down as a loving Father and pick us up and save us.

This God is the God that "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"Whoever believes in Him." It requires faith in the One who **"calls into existence the things that do not exist."**