

SERMON NOTES God – Are You There?

Dr. David A. Renwick – September 13, 2015

A. The Bible assumes God's existence: never tries to prove it!
see Gen. 1:1 –“In the Beginning God”; Ps.19:1, Rom.1:19-21

B. The Evidence

1. i. Against God: The terrible witness of Believers

- a. e.g., religious wars, strife, hypocrisy, scandal
- b. We have not followed Jesus' words
 “By this all people will know you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35)
- c. Being lukewarm/tepid, no commitment (see Rev. 3:16)
 Or Fanatical (judgmental, harsh, no love or joy)

1. ii. For God: The Terrible Witness of Unbelievers/Atheists

- a. Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, Mao, PolPot, racism, tribalism
- b. More destructive in 20th century than all religions ever.

2. i. Against God: The Problem of Evil, Suffering, Injustice

- a. Not a problem for “every kind of god,” e.g., if your “god” is weak, evil, or just grumpy, then this is not a problem!
- b. But it's a problem for the Christian God, because we see “God” as not only powerful but also as loving and just.
- c. A thought about the “creation” of evil: For moral choice to be important, choices must be between good/God and something/someone else. God's passion is to create and be in relationship with beings who could make real moral choices. The real possibility of choosing something other/less than God (= evil) necessarily means that evil must be a real possibility too.

2. ii. For God: The Problem of Goodness, Art, and Beauty

- a. The atheist must ask an equally difficult question:
 How come there is so much goodness in the world if there is no God, or if “survival of the fittest” (dog-eat-dog) is the primary law of the universe?

C. The Impossibility of Proving the Case – Either Way

- i. Belief always trumps Reason for both the believer and the atheist. An atheist is as much a believer as a ‘believer.’
- ii. There are no proofs, only clues (Tim Keller); or rumors (Peter Berger)

D. Two Clues for God

i. Science

- a. The Bible does not tell us *how* the world was created, but *that* God was in it – from beginning to end.
- b. THE big question is not just “God, are you there?” but “Why is there something rather than nothing?”
- c. The statistical probability that human life would ever exist is tiny (see interview of Francis Collins www.salon.com, Aug. 7, 2006; *The Language of God*, Francis Collins, 2006)

ii. The Need for Meaning

- a. Somerset Maugham (in *The Summing Up*):
 “If one puts aside the existence of God...the answer is so unpalatable that most will not face it: life has no meaning.”
- b. John Paul Sartre (in *Nausea*):
 “...here we are eating and drinking... and there's nothing, nothing, absolutely no reason for existing.”

iii. Meaning is almost always related to relationships

This is THE CLUE:

Ultimate meaning comes from a relation with the ultimate personal being . . . **God . . .**

Background or Follow Up Reading

1. *The Reason for God*, Timothy Keller, 2008.
2. *God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, Christopher Hitchens, 2007
3. “How I found God and peace with my atheist brother” (Peter Hitchens' return to Christianity) December 16, 2011. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1255983>
4. *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins, 2006.
5. *Why There Almost Certainly is a God: Doubting Dawkins*, Keith Ward, 2008
(The book is detailed philosophy; the video is easier: see <http://vimeo.com/10259981#>)
6. *A Rumor of Angels* Peter Berger, 1969.
7. *Death in the City*, Francis Schaeffer, 1969.
8. *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*, Norman Geisler, Frank Turek, 2004