



THE PASTOR'S VOICE

Insights from Church Leaders

The Pastor's Voice Podcast Season 2: Episode 7

Transcript: Social Justice and Knowing God

Can we find God in just looking around us at creation? Can we know what He wants us to do?

Welcome to the Pastor's Voice. I am Reuel Sample - and I am passionate about Christian Worldview and the various ways we can proclaim the good news of Christ. I talk to Pastors and Christian leaders about the issues of the day to encourage all believers in Jesus to live a Christian Worldview. On Sundays, I share my own thoughts on faith-based Worldview - based on an ongoing study of the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

Micah 6:6-8

With what shall I come to the Lord
And bow myself before the God on high?
Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings,
With yearling calves?

Does the Lord take pleasure in thousands of rams,
In ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I give Him my firstborn for my wrongdoings,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has told you, mortal one, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God?

John 3:16 - 21

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him. 18 The one who believes in Him is not judged; the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, so that his deeds will not be exposed. 21 But the one who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds will be revealed [f]as having been performed in God."

From the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Q3: What do the scriptures principally teach?

A: The scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.

Last time, the Catechism tackled the importance of Scripture in the lives and walk of Christians. Scripture is THE standard. They are literally breathed out by God to direct us in all things that we do. It is authoritative by its own decree - and by the moving of the Spirit within us. The Bible - the Old and the New Testaments - is the sole guide as to how to live life faithfully. While other writings - like the Shorter Catechism - may help - they all must be measured against Scripture.

Having established the authority of Scripture, the catechism then asks - what do they teach? The answer - they teach about God and what He would have us do.

God is revealed to us in two ways. First is what we call General Revelation, the second - Special Revelation.

General Revelation is the idea that all creation attests to the glory and wonder of God. By simply looking around us we can understand that there is a God - and He is powerful. The words of an old campfire song best sums up General Revelation:

Have you seen Jesus my Lord? He's here in plain view.
Take a look, open your eyes. He'll show life to you.

Have you ever looked at a sunset, with the sky billowing red?
And the clouds suspended like feathers?
Then I say, you've seen Jesus my Lord.

Have you ever stood in the ocean, with the white foam at your feet?
Felt the endless thundering motion?
Then I say, you've seen Jesus my Lord.

All we have to do is look around us to see the glory and wonder of creation - and we see God!

But creation's testament to God does not stop at campfires and sunsets. Even put under the microscope, creation attests to a Creator God. The idea of an eyeball - for example - is just one proof that God must exist. The eyeball cannot have evolved. It is too complex - it is what we call Irreducible Complexity - which means it had to be created as such. The simple eyeball is so complex and integrated - it just could not have happened. Something must have created it - God.

Even the Quantum level of physics attest to the glory of God. The more minute we get into creation - the more we see that a Designer had to be involved. As a matter of fact, one of the principle scientists involved in Quantum mechanics is a Christian. Take this passage from GotQuestions.org:

The early pioneers of modern physics were mostly theists, particularly Christians, and they didn't see their discoveries as eliminating God. Rather, they saw them as

illuminating God's methods. John Polkinghorne is an example of this in action, specifically involving quantum physics. Polkinghorne, a lifelong Christian, is one of the scientists responsible for discovering the sub-nuclear particles known as quarks, a critical part of the quantum model. He retired after twenty-five years teaching at Cambridge in order to become an Anglican priest. His scientific credentials are such that even aggressive anti-theists, such as Richard Dawkins, are at a loss to write off his faith as delusion or confusion.

At any level - creation attests to the existence of God. That is Special Revelation.

The problem with General Revelation, though, is that we often - more than not - get it wrong. The problem is not primarily with the revelation through creation - it is more a problem with us. Romans 3 verse 23 explains it perfectly. All have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God. That sin - the sin of disobedience that is an inherent part of our nature - effects everything that we do or say or think. We are kind of like the guy with the broken lens in his glasses. We kinda, sorta can see - but not really. We get hints of truth - but only partially. Paul in I Corinthians 13:12 seems to complete this thought:

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

Therefore, we cannot know every aspect about God - or even get much right - through General Revelation because the tools that we have - our brains, our hearts, our reason - all are damaged from the outset. The picture we get of God from creation around is at the best incomplete - because we ourselves are lacking through sin.

That is where Special Revelation comes in. Special Revelation is that direct message given to us from God - and it is about God - and what He wants us to do. Because it is directly from Him - and guided by His spirit in both the preservation of that revelation and the interpretation of it - Special Revelation is authoritative and complete. Any misinterpretation of what God has given us is not the fault of His revelation - but our own.

That Special Revelation - of course - is Scripture. You can see why this question must come after the question declaring and asserting the authority of the Bible in all aspects of our lives. Because it is authoritative - it contains everything we need to know about God and his purpose for us for this lifetime. It is not a complete picture of God - it cannot be - for the eternal God will not be contained - even in descriptions of Himself. But God has given to us everything we need to know to walk in faith - including about Himself.

The Scripture - teaches the Catechism - teaches two primary things - about God - and about His purpose for us.

The next question in the catechism goes more into the subject of God. But, it is in the person of Jesus Christ that Special Revelation is the most clear - and one where General Revelation might not be.

In General Revelation - we - if we are honest even in our sinfulness - would come to a conclusion that something higher and more powerful is at work - or was at work - in the reality around us. The idea of an Intelligent Designer is not really a faith statement - it is in reality good science. But it is Scripture that gives us a more detailed view of God - and just how much He loves us.

From Scripture, we see that God is both One - and three separate Persons - and all are equally God. We see that God is all powerful and holy. He is eternal and timeless. We see that all things are in His hands. Nothing is out of His control, nothing can go against His will. He stands at the beginning of time and at the end of time - and is the same unchanging God.

And Scripture tells us about Jesus. Jesus - the Son of God - yet fully God Himself. 100% Man - 100% God. Begotten - not made - and has the same authority. He was at the beginning of all things - and through Him all things were made. It was against God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - that Adam sinned and cursed all creation to groan under the weight of separation from God. But because God loved the world so much, He was willing to send His only Son - God Himself - to live among the fallen, to share in their joys and woes, to experience pain and loss. It was Jesus - fully God and fully Man - who suffered God's wrath against sin on the cross. Fully man - because only a full

human could be offered up for a sacrifice. Fully God - for only God can withstand the wrath of God. It was Jesus who at the end of his turmoil on the cross was laid in tomb - and it was Jesus who rose from the dead - to leave the empty tomb behind him - and so doing brought those who believe in Him into life eternal. And all we have to do is to believe in Him - and then give our lives to Him.

That is what Special Revelation teaches us about God that General Revelation cannot - that God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

And - as the catechism goes on - Scripture teaches us what God requires us to do. The words of Micah are perfect for this. We are to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God. To do what is right - and to fight for the right of those who might be powerless. To stand up against the sin in the world - and to work to make a change. To live in mercy and kindness with each other. The Hebrew word for "kindness" means loyalty as well - meaning that we should look out for each other - to place others above our own needs when possible. And in all things - to walk humbly, reverently, joyfully, worshipfully, repentfully with God.

But the world is full of social justice warriors. How does this differ from any of them? Well - that is the Christian Worldview heart of the matter.

Take - for example - the environmental causes that so often get people upset today. If we were to rely on General Revelation - if we were looking for a God at all - we could say that pollution, deforestation, overuse of plastics, carbon footprints are all major threats. Our purpose - then - becomes to fight for that environmental cause - whatever it may be. At the extremes - those who fight for environmental causes justify any means possible with the goal of reducing man's impact. In fact, the fanaticism displayed by many environmental activists often mirrors - or becomes - a religion onto itself. So the end goal is to take care of nature - because that becomes our god.

Another example is fighting for economic justice. Quite often there is no searching for a god in this realm. For many in this fight, their god is one of fairness and equality. Again, their fervor for the fairness and equity deity reaches fever levels as they overtax the rich, overthrow capitalism, and attempt to make everyone the same.

On the other hand, the Christian should seek first to know God - to know of His love and mercy for us. To know of His holiness - and to seek after His wisdom. Jesus said as much - Seek first the Kingdom of God - and His righteousness. We cannot possibly hope to promote any kind of justice - with any kind of wisdom or reason - apart from first seeking and knowing and worshipping God. Because no matter how "good" our intentions - apart from faith in the risen Jesus and the grace that He imparts to us - our sinful and disobedient nature will always get in the way of any lasting change. Always.

However, if we have our eyes fully focused on Christ, then we can see answers to these issues that might never have occurred to us - simply because we are now seeking Christ-centered solutions. For example - as Christians - the approach to the environment is not that we are merely another part of creation. Genesis makes it very clear that we are the highest physical created beings - and that God has appointed us to be stewards over all that we see. That means always trying to find ways to take care of what has been given to us. To develop technology and methods that ease the burden on creation. To not be afraid to use what God has given us - but use it wisely and well. All the while knowing that ultimately God is in control of the environment - and we are stewards in worship of Him - and not that of planet earth.

No matter what the cause - be it economic justice, social justice, racial matters, gender issues - we cannot possibly get anything done apart from Christ. In fact - we more than often will make things worse. But - if we look to the risen Savior first in all things - we will know what justice we are to pursue - and how.

If you are listening to this podcast, and do not know the risen Savior, I invite you to take some time to read through the gift of the Bible that He has given to us to learn more about Him. I invite you to contact me at podcasts@thepastorsvoice.net so we can have a conversation about what you are seeking. I guarantee you - your life will never be the same.

If you are a follower of Jesus, then remember this - seek Him FIRST in all things - no matter what. Seek Him in prayer, seek Him in worship individually and with others, seek Him in a daily attendance to Scripture. First seek to know who God is. Not with a goal to fix any injustice that may be on your heart. Not to use Him as a vessel to things

done. In fact - the opposite is true. God will use you - in wonderful ways, in terrifying ways, in ways that you never thought possible - but always to His justice, in His love - and to his glory.

Amen

If you are listening to this podcast, and are having questions walking with Jesus - either as a non-believer who has questions or as a believer seeking prayer and support - please contact me at podcasts@thepastorsvoice. I would love to pray with you, explore some questions and answers, and put you in touch with people who go deeper with you as you seek God and who He is..

You have been listening to the Pastor's Voice. I am Reuel Sample - thank you for listening.