

### *To The Greeks Foolishness*

This morning we consider Paul's words: "But we preach Christ crucified, [which is] to the Greeks foolishness". What is the best argument you can think of against God's existence? Perhaps you're thinking of the problem of evil or the argument from science or perhaps you are thinking of something else entirely. Either way, there are a lot of arguments to choose from. What comes to my mind as the best argument against God's existence is what is known as the "no-argument argument". The premise of this argument is quite simple. It goes like this: "The absence of good reasons to believe that God exists is itself a good reason to believe that God does not exist." To state the premise more bluntly: What good comes from believing in God? What's the benefit of belief? What's lost if I don't believe? And what possible difference does it make to my everyday life if I do decide to believe? In one sense, the argument is entirely logical. What would happen if you walked out of here today and decided I don't believe anymore; and because I don't believe, I will no longer go to church, worship, pray, consider the Bible as sacred or cling to the possibility of a future life in heaven? Well, absolutely nothing would happen to you. Your life would continue without interruption. You don't necessarily need God to have a good life, to be a good person or to do good things in this world. In fact, some would argue your life improves. Without God, you are now accountable for your own success or failure, no more turning to God or praying for His will to be done, no more relying on Providence to shield you from personal responsibility. The no-argument argument against God's existence amounts to this: belief in God is foolishness.

When you encounter someone who doesn't believe chances are this will be their argument. A very small percentage of people in our country today are outwardly hostile toward religious belief. More often than not they are just simply indifferent. Insouciance more than bitterness drives lack of faith in our country. And when you encounter such an indifferent approach to God it will not do to launch into all kinds of proofs for God's existence. I have found such arguments are wasted on those who see no value

in belief. I am not saying dogma doesn't matter, but what I am saying is you can't argue anyone into the Kingdom of heaven. There is a place for discussing the finer points of theology, but they offer no defense against the no-argument argument. In these moments, when God and belief are thought to be foolish, we must take a different approach. So let us flip it around and ask ourselves: What is the best argument for God's existence? And here I would offer the best argument is the aesthetic argument. By starting here we do not immediately go on the defense with someone. Too often we take a defensive posture in the face of critiques, which many find repugnant. It is much better to accentuate the positive, to find common ground. The aesthetic argument begins with a contemplation of beauty in our world. Our ability to know beauty or the fact that beauty exists is a very strong argument for God's existence. We might not all find the same things beautiful, but whether we find such beauty in music or art or literature or nature, the concept of beauty is universal and experienced by every human being. But why do we experience beauty at all? Our experience of beauty is rather pointless if you think about it. Beauty serves no purpose in the overall evolutionary development of the human species. It cannot be accounted for in terms of survival or natural selection. So why, then, does every human being experience beauty? Many evolutionists have tried to argue this point away by saying, "Well, it has to do with the propagation of our species. We are attracted to beautiful things because such attraction encourages reproduction or helps us to identify fertile land to occupy and inhabit". But this line of thinking doesn't quite measure up. For when I gaze upon the Rocky Mountains and experience a sense of wonder at their sheer majesty and magnitude, it is not because I think such uninhabitable terrain suitable for living or a safe space for raising a family or anything like that. No, my experience of beauty and nostalgia is not practical at all, but rather taps into something deeper, something more profound, something unique, which has no place in the so called blind universe with its "survival of the fittest" laws of existence. In experiencing beauty, we feel ourselves to be in contact with

a deeper reality than the everyday. It is as if our appreciation of things external to us are reflecting a pre-conscious harmony between us and the world from which we spring.

But how can we account for this aesthetic judgment unless it arises from a Divine purpose revealed in the universe? God is a God of beauty and harmony, and He weaves His attributes into the very fabric of creation itself. Only humans have the capacity to sense and enjoy this order in the Divine pattern. This sixth sense goes beyond the biological and allows us to comprehend a world endowed with value and meaning. Who amongst us has not had such an experience? Perhaps you stood speechless while watching a sunset or read a poem, which touched your soul or witnessed an act of unspeakable love or beheld a painting or some other work of art that moved you? By all accounts, what you experienced was something foolish, nonsensical, a complete waste of time. And yet don't we live for such moments? They remind us that we are alive. It's as if for the briefest instance our nature transcends our origin and we are more than just a vast assembly of nerve cells and molecules; more than atoms in the void. We are humans created for so much more than this world can offer. The beauty we pick up on all around us stirs within us a longing for an even greater beauty. But this desire can never be fulfilled apart from God. Only God can provide the transcendent reference point. Beauty, then, acts as a portal to lead us beyond the finite to the infinite, beyond the subjective to the objective, beyond the fleeting and constantly changing to the Absolute stillness. And there in a world beyond our world we encounter God. In Him our desires are satisfied and we find hope and purpose and value for this bizarre thing called life. Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Mills

