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Title: *The Reason for God*

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11-14

Speaker: James Isaac

Well, hello. It's good to be here with you today. If I've not had the opportunity to meet you. My name is James Isaac. I serve here at the Wexford campus as the Director of Student Ministry. So, normally on Sunday mornings, I would be upstairs with our middle school students. And we have a lot of fun up there. What's also fun is I got a call two hours before service started from Kurt indicating that he would not be able to be here at service due to an unexpected last-minute occurrence. And so, he asked if I would come this morning and teach. And so here I am.

It's safe to assume that given a two-hour window, we are not going to be focusing on First Corinthians this morning. We're going to hit pause on that and revisit that in the coming weeks. But really, what that does is this morning allows the opportunity for me to share something that's near and dear to my heart. And as I do that, I want to give you a little bit of context as to a little bit of my journey and who I am. And I think what that will do is that will set the stage really well today to have the conversation or at least start a conversation about this particular topic.

So, I grew up my entire life in the church and spent my entire adult life working in the church. And I would be the kid that was causing trouble in Kidzburgh. The one acting out in student ministry who now I get the pleasure of leaning into and addressing those situations. So, what goes around comes around. But I grew up my entire life in the church.

And it's interesting because I started to realize, especially through my years in high school, that while I grew up, I had a lot of knowledge of the Bible. I heard all the stories in Sunday school. I heard all the messages from the youth group. But I really began to question a lot of the fundamentals of what Scripture said and some of even what I was taught of who God is.

And surely if we were to go around here this morning, we could probably all at one point in our lives identify a point where we asked difficult questions, questions of why. Is there evil in the world or is there even a God and why do we have evidence that he exists? And there are a couple of things that you can do in those moments.

I think the first response is to hit points of questioning, tip points of saying, you know what, this isn't adding up in my mind. And the response can either be to hold that at

arm's length and kind of shun what we've been taught or the things that we've heard and go in the opposite direction. Or the other response can be to lean into those questions and begin to seek answers and try to connect the dots in a way that makes sense to us.

And so, for me, over the course of some of my time in college and then going on to seminary, I would begin to go on the journey of connecting the dots that actually go on to in seminary, get my degree in something called apologetics, which if you're unfamiliar with apologetics it's really the rational defense of Christianity. In other words, how do I rationally defend the Bible? And how do I articulate it as a rational worldview?

So, this morning I want to lean into that. And I want to talk about the reasons for God. And more specifically, does God really exist? And to do this, I want to cover three different arguments. And there are a number of other things that you could draw into this. But this morning, I want to highlight three in particular.

I want to start by talking about cosmological arguments. And then from there moving into what we would call the fine-tuning arguments, seeing how the universe around us, life as we know it, is so finely tuned. And then from there, talking about the moral arguments and addressing morality as we see it in society, in the world beyond. And finally, ending with how does that relate to scripture and more importantly or equally importantly, how does that relate to our lives?

So, I begin with the cosmological arguments Now, since the universe exists, it must have been caused by something beyond itself. Now we know that every finite changing thing must be caused by something else. Each and every one of us here was the cause of something else. Furthermore, we interact with finite things on a daily basis, and we understand those things are a direct result or a direct cause of something other than ourselves. Finite things are caused by something else.

Now, in everybody's pockets or phones, surely you have a smartphone, right? I have an iPhone here. Every time I pull out my phone, this is a finite object. I can't remember when I bought it, but I know it's a finite object. It had a beginning. It will surely have an end.

And I understand that the intricacies behind such a product were orchestrated by somebody else. Now there's a team at Apple who thought of this design, who laid it out, crafted it, and ultimately produced it, and were responsible for the product that I now have in my pocket and that most of you possess as well. Now, applying that same logic, for that same reason, it would stand to reason that if the universe had a

beginning, it was the direct result or cause of something or someone else. Something greater.

Now, there are some that would argue that the universe, in fact, did not have a beginning and has existed forever. Now, to address this, I want to pull in something known as the law of thermodynamics, and I'm not going to get into that. Surely there are people in here who are far more brilliant and could articulate it much better. But in bringing this up, I want to highlight the second law of thermodynamics and more specifically, this idea of entropy. And just to summarize it and give a very brief description of what that is, essentially, there is a finite amount of energy that is present in our universe. Now, once that energy runs out, the universe will be unable to support life.

So, if the universe has existed for an infinite period of time, as some might suggest, it wasn't created, I would propose that entropy, our finite amount of energy would have run its course and we would no longer be able to sustain life. Now, this is a little bit of a difficult concept to really fully wrap our minds around, because you have to deal with the issue of time, and more specifically, you have to begin to think about eternity, which can really make your head spin.

But let's suppose, for instance, that you had an infinite amount of shoes. I'm a shoe guy. So, I love this. I love this kind of analogy, the thought of there being an infinite number of shoes. And if I'm honest with you, if you were to probably go into our closets I have far more shoes than even my wife does. So, that's out there now. Real talk. I see some of you are nudging the person next to you and you're like, that's you in this equation, right? You have far more pairs of shoes than you could possibly ever need or want. And this relates to you.

But let's suppose I had an infinite number of shoes all laid out, extending into eternity. Now, let's suppose that somebody decides to steal a quarter of those shoes, a section. How many shoes would I have left remaining? I'd have an infinite amount because you can't take even a portion of an infinite amount, you're still left with an infinite amount.

Now, why do I share that? Because it isn't possible to have a finite, limited amount of energy in a universe that has existed for an infinite amount of time. Now, therefore, because we know that the universe has a finite amount of energy; we can assume that the universe had a beginning. And if the universe had a beginning, we can logically conclude that it had a creator, because every finite changing thing must have been caused by something else.

Now, many people would argue that just because the universe had a beginning doesn't prove that a creator was involved. Specifically, many would adhere to the Big Bang Theory. For instance, that would state the universe had a star but really had no creator. So, which brings me to a second argument that is known as the fine-tuning argument. The fine-tuning argument goes something like this, all complex design implies a creator or a designer.

The universe, and especially life within that, has a complex design. Therefore, the universe must have had a designer. Now the universe operates at a level of finely tuned adjustments. There are thousands of different things and perhaps millions of different things that you could point to. But just to name a few, if you were to look at the distance of earth in relation to other planets, like specifically even to the moon, or the distance of the Earth to the sun, any sort of variance, either too close to the sun and life no longer becomes sustainable or too far from the sun and life again no longer becomes sustainable. All pointing to a finely tuned solar system in which we live. And again, pointing to a design and thus a designer.

If you look at even the gravitational force and the constant force that it is within the universe, we've now known to understand the gravitational force, if it were to be altered, get this, in less than one part in ten to the hundredth power. Some of you could probably compute out that far. I cannot. That is an astronomical number. If the gravitational force of the universe were to be altered even to that less of an amount, life as we know it would not be possible. Stars could not form. If too strong, stars would burn up quickly.

All of these things. There's such complexity within the universe in which we live all pointing to an intricate design in the universe we live in. Even beyond that at a more personal level, if we were to take the complexity of DNA in a living organism. The amount of DNA information contained within a single cell is staggeringly vast.

I think this is interesting because there is a famous scientist and an outspoken atheist known as Carl Sagan, a brilliant mind. And Carl Sagan once said this. I want to read this quote to you all, he says, "The information contents of the human brain expressed in bit is probably comparable to the total number of connections among neurons. About 100 trillion, ten to the 14th power bits." I read that and say, what on earth are you saying here, Carl? I have no clue.

He elaborates on this and puts this in layman's terms. He says, "If written out in English, say that information would fill some 20 million volumes, as many as the world's largest libraries. The equivalent of 20 million books is inside the heads of each and every one of us."

Carl Sagan says that there is the equivalent of 20 million books inside the brains, in the minds of each and every one of us. He ends this quote by saying this, "The brain is a very busy place in a very small space. The neurochemistry of the brain is astonishingly busy. The circuitry of a machine more wonderful than any devised by humans."

Now, given such a statement, it's hard to believe that such complexity is generated by mere chance. Now, I'm not well versed in statistics, odds, and probability, but thankfully there are people out there who are. In fact, one scientist figured the odds for a single cell, a one-cell animal to emerge by pure chance. He gave these odds at one in ten to the 40,000 power. Again, a staggering number. Bear in mind, the odds for a single cell animal, for an infinitely more complex human being to emerge would be too great to calculate.

So, while there are many arguments that point to the need for a designer to have specifically designed the universe as we know it to work, if you look at just the issue of DNA, you look at the complexity of the universe, given the statistics and the odds, I would suggest that it takes an equal amount, if not a vastly greater amount of faith to believe that there isn't a God, that there isn't a designer, behind the complexities of life as we know it.

See, to say that there is no faith required in science to me is an unfair argument. And as I said before, I would suggest that there perhaps is even a greater amount of faith required to believe that there isn't a God, that there isn't a designer, that there isn't somebody, that there isn't a sort of supreme being behind the 20 million volumes that are contained within our minds.

I come to the last, and the third argument that I want to highlight today which is the moral argument. Now, if God does not exist, there is no need for morality in the world. Yes, laws are nice, and they ensure a balance within society. But if you think about it, without God there is little reason for laws. There's little reason for morality.

If death is the final event for humans, there is no reason to live under a system of morality that will dictate what you can or cannot do. If death is the final thing for me, I don't want to spend my life being told the things that I can't do. I have death for the final thing. I'd want to do exactly what I felt like doing at the moment in which I felt like doing it.

Yet morality exists. Now, some may argue that morality is relative to society, and they'll say this in context to a number of issues. Depending on the person, depending on the people group, depending on the society, morality is relative to either the individual, the group, or the society.

Now, I want to give a little bit of an analogy here, and just imagine this with me. Let's say we were to take a random group of ten people. Each of them with their own moral relativist beliefs. If you were to go around this group of ten people and you were to ask each person individually what they believe, certainly you would run across somebody perhaps that believes that a certain group of people are evil, and perhaps they should be killed. You might say that's dark and move on to the next person.

They say, well, I don't believe that. I believe killing is wrong. But, you know, I'm okay with stealing the possessions of other people. If I see something, I take it. Killing is wrong. But stealing is okay. You could move to a third person, and they might say, well, you know what? Both of those are wrong. But if somebody cut me off on 79, like it's going down. That never happens.

So, if you were to go around the group, the list of moral situations of moral possibilities would be endless. Now, let's suppose that you were to release that group of people into a community in which they were free to exercise their moral relativism. What would the result be? I would suggest it would be chaos. People's possessions would be stolen, people would be killed, and people would be assaulted in the streets. It would be chaos.

Now, let's assume the opposite. Let's say there were moral absolutes. Let's suppose that the same group of people put themselves under the moral compass that was established. That they were subject to moral absolutes. The rules that state that every life is valuable, that killing is wrong, that stealing is wrong, and that assaulting other people is wrong. I would say those same ten people were released into a community. What would the result be? I would suggest that rather than chaos, there would be a movement of love and peace that would follow.

There are a lot of people that are asking in this world what is happening. I don't have to tell you that. Open any news source and read the top ten headlines and you walk away thinking to yourself, what on earth is happening to the world around us? I would suggest that we are seeing the results of a deconstruction of morality. Morality has been reduced to a relative state. What's right for me is not necessarily right for somebody else.

And it goes against how morality was created and designed to be. It was not created to be relative. It was created to be absolute. And people crave moral absolutes. At the heart of it all, I believe that people genuinely crave moral absolutes. If you don't believe me, suppose that you were to leave this place this morning and you go to your car and find somebody out there with a hammer smashing in your windshield. I would suggest at that moment you would absolutely, as would everybody else agree, that there is a moral absolute. There is a moral standard in which it is wrong for that to take place.

Logically, we as people have to believe in moral absolutes. Otherwise, the world becomes a dog-eat-dog world. Morality is not relative to society. There are moral absolutes in this world. And if there are moral absolutes, there must be an ultimate lawgiver. There must be a God. Now, why does this matter? I'd be sitting here today and thinking, why on earth would we cover all of this? Why did we talk through these different arguments? How does this relate to my life? How does this relate to Scripture? Why does this matter?

I'm reading through the book of Jeremiah in the Bible, and I think it's interesting. I'm not going to get into the deep context of Jeremiah today. I don't have the time to do that. But in broad strokes, Jeremiah is written about a prophet by the name of Jeremiah, and he's living in the midst of a politically turbulent time. There's a lot of chaos going on in the world around him. And it kind of mirrors, not exactly, but it mirrors a lot of what we're seeing in the world happening around us today. There's instability. There's uncertainty. There are all of these things that occurred during the time of Jeremiah.

And in the midst of that, God speaks through Jeremiah to his people. And the reality of Jeremiah and his ministry is that his word, in other words, God's speaking through him, was not well-received by the community to which he gave it. He was rejected. There was opposition. There was weeping. There was sorrow in the midst of this. But here's a powerful point in this message that God speaks through Jeremiah and we pick it up in Jeremiah 29, verse 11. Many of you will know this beginning verse.

It starts off, verse 11, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD."

Did you catch the last part of that passage? Seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. Why do we go through the evidences of the existence of God?

Because there are a lot of people and even those of us who perhaps have grown up our entire lives in church. I know there are people sitting in here today, who have been in church for longer than I've been alive.

But there are points where we question. There are people in here who are searching. To that, I say you're in the perfect place seeking after God because the reality is God wants to be found. He says that here in his Word. He communicated that through Jeremiah.

Now, I have a daughter. She's a year and a half, and it's fun because she's finally getting to that stage where hide and go seek is a thing. And I have to tell you this. One-and-a-half-year-olds are terrible at hide and go seek. How could they not be right? Now, if I were playing hide and go seek with, say, some of our middle school students or high school students, I would hide and never be found again. But when I go home and I play hide and go seek with my one-and-a-half-year-old daughter, I hide with the intention of being found. Yeah, I might hide behind a plant, but you know, half of me is in view, and it really doesn't take much for her to discover where I have hidden.

And I think that paints a beautiful picture of God's relationship with us. Is that we hit points in life where we say, where is God in the midst of this? Or we question God in this. When we seek after God, He wants to be found. He's given us his Son, Jesus to pay the ultimate price so that we could have salvation. God wants to be found.

Now, again, perhaps today you're sitting here and you're searching. You were invited by a friend. You're searching. You're trying to find answers in the midst of chaos. That's a great place to be. I would challenge you and encourage you this morning. Seek after God. He wants to be found.

On the other side of that, perhaps again, you've been in church your entire life. You've sat in these chairs longer than I've been alive. And you might say, I know all of this. I believe in this. So, what purpose is this to me? I would say that you have the unique opportunity and responsibility to come alongside somebody else who is seeking God, who is seeking clarity in the midst of a chaotic and confusing world, and point them to the evidences of why there is a God, and why all of the complexities of the universe make sense. That in the midst of a seemingly loveless world, there is a God, the Savior that loves them.

Will you pray with me? God, I thank you for your Word. I thank you that you desire, that we seek after you and that you desire to be found. I pray that would be the heart and objective of every person here is to seek after you God. And as your word

promises that you will be found. And we love you. We pray these things in your name. Amen. Thank you all for being here. Have a great rest of your Sunday.