

# The Universe Reveals the Grandeur of God

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*Reflection on Psalm 8*

Have you ever gazed at the sky, the stars and all it contains and become overwhelmed with awe at the grandeur and the beauty of the universe? Then, while marveling at the beauty of stars wondered what else is out there? If you have, perhaps you may remember feeling so little and yet so significant, especially when we contemplate who we are in relation to all that exists beyond that which is visible to our eyes. That overwhelming feeling of tranquility and excitement, of delight and wonder, of joy and powerlessness, and all these feelings combined with other emotions make you sigh and wonder, “who am I, a being walking and breathing in the vastness of a limitless universe that is perfectly designed for my existence at this very moment and at this very time?”. If you have had a similar experience, then you will realize that this is a lifegiving moment and that is precisely what the psalmist is describing. In other words, as the psalmist contemplates the universe and its beauty, he is amazed by the grandeur of its Designer, the author of all creation.

However, if you have not had this or a similar experience, you should take the time to contemplate creation in this way. I assure you that it will change how you perceive yourself and the rest of creation while keeping in mind that everything is a gift to us. Yes! Every single star, constellation and object you can observe was a gift to you, and me, and every single child of God. That is what God’s grace looks like.

I would like to share a little anecdote that changed how I perceive God’s grace while contemplating the stars. About a year ago, I went to Tucson, Arizona to learn about the universe. We did a lot of stargazing there. The sky was so clear that we could see stars we never knew existed. One of those nights, other seminarians and myself sat outside to discuss theology while looking at the night sky above us. It was as if we were covered in a mantle of stars, and the stars gave us a warm feeling as if we were at home. In a sense, it felt like the same stars had always been there. Then, one of us asked how long the light

from these stars had traveled in order to shine upon earth, and we wondered the entire night with little knowledge. But the more we wondered the more intrigued we became and we slowly became inspired by the fact that there is a cosmic life out there, a life that continues to move on its own in massive quantities. Then a great “aha” moment enlightened my night when suddenly it dawned on me that it does not matter how big or fast the universe expands; it does not have movement on its own, rather, it is God who continues to give movement and order to all of creation.

But our wonder did not stop there. The following day, we learned that the light from some of the stars we see has traveled millions of light years. We also learned that stars do not live forever, and that eventually they collide or explode and consequently they cease to shine. In fact, one of the astronomers who was stargazing with us told us that there is a star we currently see that will explode soon or it has exploded already, but we because light has to travel so long a distance, we may not see its light go off until fifty more years. This made a lot of us wonder if the stars we see today are still there, and the astronomers told us that science is certain that most of the stars we see are still there, but some are so far that all we can see is their light. This of course, blew our minds, for all of the sudden what we believed is physically “out there” may no longer exist and we will not know until time reveals it to us.

Now, the answer to this is what amazed me the most. The reason why we will not know if this star has already vanished is because the distance light has to travel is so long that it would take light fifty years to travel to earth and show us that this star no longer exists, which means that we will no longer see its light. Essentially, this speaks of the vastness of the universe and how distant we are from everything that exists beyond our capacity to see. This thought made me feel so little and yet, so significant. To be so small in such an immense universe and yet, I, as a human being, am greater than all that exists beyond me simply because Jesus who is fully divine, choose to become man to unite all of us to the Father, the Creator of all that exists.

At the end of my stay in Tucson, I had to ask myself about the meaning of my existence in such a large universe: what is the purpose of my being in it? Having learned how immense the universe is, how little we know, and how little we are in relation to the

universe, I wondered how greater God is, the designer of the universe, and, who am I that he is mindful of me. This thought made me ponder the grandeur of God's love for us, little creatures with rebellious hearts. Yet, God's love for us cannot be contained in the vastness of the universe, and although the universe is limitless and it continues to expand, His love cannot be contained in it, for God's love is greater than the very universe He created. At this point, I began to wonder like the psalmist, "*When I observe the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars you set in their place – what is man that you are mindful of him, and a son of man that you care for him?*". It was then that I realized how the psalmist points to something I had missed my entire life, namely, that God exalts our human dignity through our littleness, as the psalmist points out while glorifying God, "*you have given him rule over the works of your hands, put all things at his feet*". It is thus that I realized that God places everything under our feet and provides everything for us so that we can accomplish our mission here on earth, that is, to love one another as He loved us. In the end, the stars we see, the moon, the galaxies and everything contained in the universe, is but a visible sign of God's creative love. But this love, manifested in everything that exists, speaks to us and reveals that we too were created for love. This is precisely the reason why all of creation exists, to manifest the grandeur of God's love for men. Hence, let us allow ourselves to contemplate creation and discover that everything God created serves but one purpose – to make us aware of His love.