

In the spirit of sharing RC Sproul, here's a poem by Alexander Pope, one of the most celebrated poets and satirists of the English Augustan period. What makes this work extraordinary is that Pope wrote it at just 12 years old. It's astounding to think that someone so young could possess the depth of insight and experience needed to create such a beautifully crafted piece of poetry.

Ode on Solitude

Happy the man, whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air,
In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
Whose flocks supply him with attire,
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
In winter fire.

Blest, who can unconcernedly find
Hours, days, and years slide soft away,
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night; study and ease,
Together mixed; sweet recreation;
And innocence, which most does please,
With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me die;
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lie.

Alexander Pope's "Ode on Solitude", reflects a longing for quiet anonymity—living and dying without leaving a noticeable trace. The parallel to "God hiding in the universe" emerges through themes of divine mystery and subtlety.

1. Hidden Presence:

Much like Pope's speaker wishes to exist quietly and unseen, God's presence in the universe can be perceived as hidden and subtle. Scripture often describes God as being present yet not always obvious. For example, in 1 Kings 19:11-13, God reveals Himself to Elijah not in the dramatic forces of wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a "gentle whisper" or still small voice. God is there, yet hidden, moving in ways that require quiet observation to notice.

2. Divine Humility:

Pope's desire to "steal from the world" echoes the humility of God. In Philippians 2:7, Christ "emptied Himself" to take the form of a servant, quietly living among humans. God's nature often involves a self-imposed "hiddenness," allowing creation to seek Him in humility.

3. Unseen Yet Eternal Impact:

Though Pope's speaker wishes to disappear without a trace—"not a stone tell where I lie"—God's quiet work in the universe often mirrors this paradox. Though God's presence may seem obscured, it leaves a profound, eternal impact. The universe, finely tuned and vast, points to a creator who remains just outside the reach of full comprehension (Romans 1:20).

4. Solitude and Meditation:

Finally, Pope's ode aligns with the meditative practices that help one encounter the divine. Just as the speaker desires to escape worldly noise, Christians often seek God in solitude and stillness (Psalm 46:10: "Be still, and know that I am God"). Meditation becomes a way to tune into God's hidden presence.

In both God's hiddenness and the poem's vision of a life unseen, there is a beauty in quietness and mystery—one that calls us to deeper reflection and reverence.