

The God Who Knows Us
Psalm 139
Sunday, July 21st, 2024

Scripture:

Psalm 139

- [1] **O LORD, you have searched me and known me!**
- [2] **You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.**
- [3] **You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.**
- [4] **Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.**
- [5] **You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.**
- [6] **Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.**
- [7] **Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?**
- [8] **If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!**
- [9] **If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,**
- [10] **even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.**
- [11] **If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,”**
- [12] **even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.**
- [13] **For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.**
- [14] **I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.**
- [15] **My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.**
- [16] **Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.**

[17] How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!

How vast is the sum of them!

[18] If I would count them, they are more than the sand.

I awake, and I am still with you.

[19] Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!

O men of blood, depart from me!

[20] They speak against you with malicious intent;

your enemies take your name in vain.

[21] Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD?

And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

[22] I hate them with complete hatred;

I count them my enemies.

[23] Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

[24] And see if there be any grievous way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting!

Pray

Introduction

We currently live in one of, if not the most technologically advanced society in the world. There are new gadgets, gizmos, tools, and programs coming out at lighting speed. In light of all of this advancement, it can feel like an exciting time to be alive.

But we rarely ever take time to stop and ask ourselves what are the consequences of this advancement. And when we take a look behind the curtain of our society's race to create more at faster speeds, we realize that in its wake there are things like loneliness, isolation, hiding, and depression on the rise, and others like genuine community, belonging, and feelings of acceptance on the decline.

Even within a place like this, the community of faith, these feelings can exist and persist in the lives of God's people. We can want to hide because of sin in our lives. We can feel lonely because people seem too busy to get to know us. Or we can struggle to feel accepted because we don't think we fit in or belong.

But the beauty of God's words through David in Psalm 139 is that no matter how you feel about yourself there is a God in heaven who says that you are perfectly known and loved by him, because he is the one who made you to be his child

So this morning, if you are struggling to believe that you have value or you are feeling alone or like you don't belong, let these words be a reminder of how precious you are in his sight. That

you are loved and accepted, and in turn, may they lead you to love him and follow him all the days of your life.

With this in mind, the first thing that David tells us in this Psalm is that

1. We are fully known by God (V. 1-5)

I want to take you back in time to one of the greatest eras of television that I believe ever existed. It's known as the sitcom era that came to popularity in the 1960's and remained strong all the way until the early 2000's.

This era of television included great shows like The Dick Van Dyke Show, Gilligan's Island, Happy Days, The Brady Bunch, Cheers, Full House, Saved By the Bell, Seinfeld, Friends, and Scrubs just to name a few.

One of the enduring qualities of this era and these shows is that they usually included a family, group of friends, or co-workers, who, despite their differences and oddities accepted one another.

It felt like each character found a place where they could be fully known, cared for, and loved, regardless of their quirks and flaws.

And I believe that these kinds of shows remained popular for over 50 years because we each have within us a God-given desire for the same thing.

A desire that was hardwired into us when God created humanity. As it says in Genesis 1:27-28a:

*[27] So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

[28] And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it..."

Men and women are created by God, in his image, so that we would multiply and fill the earth, which means that we are meant to live in community with one another. **We were made to know and be known by one another.**

But more than that, we were made to know and be known by God. As Moses writes two chapters later in the first part of Genesis 3:8:

[8] And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day...

Why was God in the garden? Because he wanted to commune and have fellowship with Adam and Eve. **He wanted to know and be known by them.**

And if you are here this morning, and you are feeling that longing and pull in your heart to be fully known and accepted, the good news of Psalm 139 is not just that our God wants to know us, **but that we are already fully known by him.**

Look with me at Psalm 139:1: *[1] O LORD, you have searched me and known me!*

The Psalmist David is not speaking as if he is asking God or waiting for God to do something, but instead, he is singing and proclaiming what God has already done.

God has searched or examined him thoroughly and he knows him deeply and intimately. And if you are asking yourself “What does it mean to be deeply and intimately known by God?” David tells us in verses 2-4:

*[2] You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.*

*[3] You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.*

*[4] Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.*

God knows David in such a deep and all-encompassing way that he knows when he sits, stands, goes somewhere, and sleeps.

Though he is the Almighty God who sits on his throne in heaven, he discerns and understands every one of David's thoughts to the point that he knows them before he even thinks them or speaks them. **Because God truly knows and understands the totality of who David is and all that he does.**

He knows the good, the bad, his strengths, weaknesses, desires, stresses, struggles, fears, and joys. This allows us to confidently say that God knows David better than David knows himself.

And if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ this morning these verses are meant to be a comfort to you.

We live in a world that is continually isolating people behind screens that make human interaction more of a transaction than a relationship.

Through our devices, we are able to present a clean and censored response to people so that we don't ever have to reveal the true messy realities of our thoughts and our hearts.

On top of that, these last 10 years have made our country so radically and angrily polarized that it can be scary to share who we are and what we believe for fear being misunderstood and rejected.

But the good news of the gospel is that we are fully known and loved by God. He knows every nook and cranny of your life from beginning to end. Every thought, word, and deed, biggest to smallest he sees, and yet, because of the blood of his son Jesus Christ applied to you, he loves you and accepts you. As Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:10:

[10] Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

This is why David, who was under the Old Covenant, but looking for the Messiah to come could write in verse 5:

*[5] You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.*

He understood that the same God who chose him and redeemed him, is the same God who knows all of him and yet still loves and accepts him.

So know that you are not alone. **Instead, you are fully known and loved by your faithful and loving God, Creator, and Savior.**

And it's my hope that many of you genuinely feel comforted by this truth.

But I also know that some of you might struggle with this, or find yourself scared by the idea of being fully known in that way.

You might be thinking, "How can God know me and still love me when I've done...?" "How can God know me and love me when I currently feel like I am living in sin or running away from him?" "How can God know me and love me when my life is such a mess and I can't seem to get my act together?"

The answer to these questions are found in the truth that no matter where we go or what we do...

2. We are passionately pursued by God (V. 7-12)

Psalm 139:7

*[7] Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?*

Even though we don't know the exact setting of this Psalm, David is expressing a desire in verse 7 to find a place where he can escape God.

Because the sin or situation David is facing is causing him so much unrest that his only response is to try and run from God.

Can you relate to that feeling? That in the face of sins or trials you would rather run from God than have him see your mess? **I know I can. There have been times in my life when I am dealing with something hard and all I want to do is put my head in the sand and pretend it doesn't exist and God doesn't see it.**

But if we remember the life of David, we know that there was a time when he tried to do the same thing.

In 2 Samuel 11, David stayed home from battle and sent Joab, his general instead. While he was in his castle he was walking on the roof, looked down, and saw this woman Bathsheba bathing.

He was so enamored by her beauty that he sent messengers to get her, had sex with her while her husband was away at battle, tried to send her home like nothing happened, and then she got pregnant.

From there, David tries to cover it up by bringing her husband home so he would think he was the father. And when that didn't work, he had him killed in battle, and then David took her as his wife.

David committed a series of egregious and terrible sins and then tried to live as if they didn't happen. **But God in his goodness and mercy wouldn't allow David to hide and cover them up.**

So he sent the prophet Nathan to expose him in 2 Samuel 12:9 when he says:

[9] Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

Now, I realize that having sin exposed never feels good, and at the time it sure doesn't feel like God is being merciful. **Also, in a situation like this, it could be easy to assume that David's sins are so terrible that there is no way that God would ever forgive him.**

But I am so thankful that God is not like us. Because forgiveness and mercy are exactly what God gives him. Look with me at 2 Samuel 12:13:

[13] David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die."

God exposes David's sin, but instead of receiving judgment, he brings him to a place of confession and then grants him forgiveness and the continuation of his life.

Now if you read the whole account in 2 Samuel 12 there are definitely consequences for David's actions. But at the end of all of it, God had mercy on David, forgave him of his sin, and allowed him to remain his anointed king.

And I am sharing this part of David's life with you because I want you to understand two really important things.

One, David messed up badly and tried to cover it up. But at the end of the day, God was still merciful to him and forgave him. **So if David wasn't beyond God's mercy and forgiveness, then neither are you.**

Secondly, when we read about David wanting to run from God in Psalm 139:7, we need to understand that he already tried it, and experienced, in a very real way, how impossible it is to get away from God. Which is why he writes in Psalm 139:8-12

*[8] If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!*
*[9] If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
[10] even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.*
*[11] If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,"
[12] even the darkness is not dark to you;
he night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.*

Now there's a lot of poetic language here, but I will try to make it as simple as possible. Ascending to heaven in verse 8 represents going really high up and making his bed in Sheol represents going low into the earth.

The wings of the morning in verse 9 represent sunrise and the far east and the uttermost parts of the sea from David's view in Jerusalem represent the far west where the sun sets into the Mediterranean.

And his whole point is that it doesn't matter how high or low, or how far east or west he goes. There is no place in all creation where he can get away from God. Even if he is in the utter darkness described in verse 11, he is not beyond God's reach. **Because no matter where he goes, his great and mighty God pursues him and is with him.**

But he's not with him to judge him, cast him off, or destroy him, but instead, as it says in verse 10 he is with him to lead him, hold him, and protect him.

Therefore, if God is willing to do that for a man like David even after his grievous sins, then we, who are in Christ, must believe that our God and Savior will do the same for us.

As Jesus said in John 10:27-29

[27] My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. [28] I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. [29] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

Jesus will never let go of us, no matter how much we try to hide.

And in Philippians 1:6 Paul writes:

[6] And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

No matter how far we try to run, God will bring us back to him. He will complete his good work in us as his people.

And if you are still feeling condemned by your sin this morning and want to try and hide from God, remember the words of David in Psalm 103:12:

*[12] as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*

Your sins have been fully and wholly dealt with by a perfectly just, merciful, and loving God. And no matter where you go, he loves you and pursues you, and you will never be beyond his reach and tender care.

But David doesn't just stop at telling us that we are known and pursued by God. Because he really wants us to understand why God would even want to know us and pursue us in the first place.

That we are known and pursued by God because...

3. We are intricately formed and set apart by God (V. 13-16)

Psalm 139:13-16:

*[13] For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*

[14] I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works;

my soul knows it very well.

[15] My frame was not hidden from you,

when I was being made in secret,

intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

[16] Your eyes saw my unformed substance;

in your book were written, every one of them,

the days that were formed for me,

when as yet there was none of them.

God, according to David in verse 13, formed his inward parts and knitted him together in his mother's womb. And in verse 15, God saw him even when he was being intricately woven together in the depths of the earth. Which is another way of saying that God was with him and was weaving him together, even when nobody knew it, inside of his mother's belly.

Now, I have to admit that this language doesn't always land with me because I know nothing about knitting or weaving whatsoever. **I did try to Crochet once in college and was horrible at it. All I know is that it isn't easy and can be very time intensive.**

But I wanted to understand the importance of this language in this Psalm. And in my research I came across an article that talks about hand-knitted or woven tapestries in the middle ages. And here's what I learned:

- Hand-knitted tapestries were very expensive using only the best materials.
- The process was very slow because to produce high quality works, they used very fine fabric and made a lot of stitches in a very small space.
- This means that these tapestries had an enormous thread count.
- In fact, this process was so complicated, slow, and so much care was taken to get it right, that it could take 5 weavers, working full time, for roughly 9 months to a year, to complete one single tapestry.

And yet, this is only but a small glimpse of the kind of care and craftsmanship that God put into forming us. God, with all of his creativity, intelligence, care, and love, methodically and patiently knitted ever fiber of our bodies, minds, and souls together.

And like a master weaver, who gets commissioned to create an intricate tapestry for a purpose, God knitted us and formed each one of us with a plan and purpose already in his mind.

As David writes in verse 14: ***"I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."***

Now, if you have an ESV study Bible you will notice that the study note for this verse points out that the Hebrew word for "Wonderfully made" is *nipleti* which means to be **"set apart."**

In fact, David uses this same word in Psalm 4:3 which says:

[3] But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.

So in David's words, God purposely and intricately made us so that we would be set apart as his people even before we were born.

Jesus also says something similar in John 15:16 when he says:

[16] You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

And if God choosing us and setting us apart isn't wonderful enough, David doubles down on God's plan for us when he says in Psalm 139:16:

[16] Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

You see, God didn't just set us apart as his people before we were born, but he wrote our whole life before we even saw the light of day. **Let that sink in.**

As Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8-10:

[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

You and I, who are benefactors of the blood of Christ shed for us and are called God's people, are known by him and pursued by him not because we earned it or deserve it.

But because God, in his infinite love, grace, and mercy formed us, set us apart, and wrote every part of our lives into existence so that we would be his people and would do the good he has planned for us.

Now, I realize that there are a whole host of theological questions that go along with this, but right now, **I want you to receive this as good news from God.**

God intimately knows us and passionately pursues us, because in love and by his grace, he intricately formed us and set us apart to be his children who are saved but by the blood of Christ.

So the next time you feel like you have made a mess of your life or find yourself questioning God's love for you or why he would want to even know you and be with you, **remember:**

He chose you, he made you, and set you apart for his purposes. **It truly is a gift of God and not a result of our works.**

It is my sincere hope that you are beginning to feel the full magnitude and joy of these verses this morning. Because they shouldn't leave us indifferent to God, but instead should be tugging at our hearts to respond to him.

And the only right response to such amazing truths and promises is a response of worship.

4. We respond by worshipping God (V. 17-24)

[17] How precious (weighty) to me are your thoughts, O God!

How vast is the sum of them!

[18] If I would count them, they are more than the sand.

I awake, and I am still with you.

[19] Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!

O men of blood, depart from me!

[20] They speak against you with malicious intent;

your enemies take your name in vain.

[21] Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD?

And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

[22] I hate them with complete hatred;

I count them my enemies.

[23] Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

[24] And see if there be any grievous way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting!

In light of God knowing him, pursuing him, forming him, and setting him apart, David's response is to be overwhelmed and in awe of God, which leads him to pray that God would accomplish his purposes in the world and in his own heart.

For he now understands how precious, weighty, vast, and good God's thoughts are in verse 17. And he is so overjoyed and shocked by the truth that God would still love and accept him that he says in verse 18 *"I awake, (like he's waking from a dream) and I am still with you."*

This is David's way of saying, "God's power and love for me are so great that I had to pinch myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming."

But the awe and joy of God are more than mere feelings. Rather they are heart attitudes and responses to God, that lead to a hatred of sin, confession, repentance, and a desire to walk in holiness.

For David, this led him to pray in verses 19-22 that God would take care of the evil that he saw around him, but also, in verses 23-24, that God would deal with the evil in his own heart.

That he would continue to search him and know him and expose the grievous and terrible ways in him so that he could live in ways that honor God and lead to an eternity with God.

Because David is not worried anymore about being exposed anymore. Rather, he firmly believes that God intimately knows him and passionately pursues him, because God patiently and lovingly formed him and set him apart for his great purposes.

Church, I hope you leave this morning believing the same things. That God knows every part of you and yet he is continually with you and for you because he fashioned you.

And if you have put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then when he looks at you, all he sees is perfection, because you have been washed white as snow by the blood of Christ.

And it's my prayer that these truths and promises will lead each one of us to a genuine response of worship. One, that creates within us a desire for God to accomplish his purposes in the world, and in our hearts.

Because no matter where you go and no matter what you do God isn't going to cast you away. He loves you and is working for your best, even in the hard, as he fashions you more into the image of his son Jesus Christ, and prepares you for the eternity to come.

The question is do you believe this, and will you respond to him today?

Let's Pray