

GOD THE OMNIPOTENT
Psalm 139:1-18; 23-24
Colossians 1:15-23
Preached by Dr. Cahill
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Psalm 139 makes it abundantly clear God is omnipotent, all powerful and all knowing. Never underestimate this core conviction, even more momentous than Copernicus' insight that the earth revolves around the sun. True biblical history records on numerous occasions the Jews flirted with false gods just to cover their bets, but we also know God sent his prophets to call them back to this reality: "Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one."

Have you ever wondered why such a small, insignificant ethnic group was the first to believe in one God? Certainly they didn't figure it out on their own. Skeptics may argue the Jews were admittedly ingenious conjuring up this belief, if only because they wanted to stand out from the crowd. But when you read the Hebrew scriptures with a discerning spirit, especially the foundational stories of God calling Abraham to be the Father of a nation that would bless all the peoples of the earth, and then Moses' experience with the great and awesome "I AM WHO I AM" speaking from the Burning Bush, we discover what they discovered, the only way they got to know God was because God made himself known.

We believe God makes himself known through the Bible, but even before the scriptures were written, God revealed himself to a certain few who then passed it on to others. How? Maybe it happened this way. Picture this scene: a family of Semitic shepherds is sitting around a campfire under the countless stars above after a long, hard day when suddenly a young boy, overwhelmed by the grandeur of the night sky asks, "Grandfather, who made all the stars, the sky, the land and the sea and all the animals and people?" The grandfather himself suddenly filled with wonder is divinely inspired with the revolutionary insight that one God created the world.

And so it begins, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..." This narrative was orally passed down from one generation to the next until the author of the Creation Story finally put pen to paper.

Again this understanding of God was unique to the Jews. In ancient times it was commonly believed each tribal god had jurisdiction only within the boundaries of its territory, and therefore powerless in foreign lands. But then the Jews stood out, claiming one God is sovereign over the heavens and the earth. They didn't necessarily disbelieve other gods existed, but as the generations passed and their faith matured, by the time of Christ, the Jews realized all false gods were just figments of men's distorted imaginations - all the more reason for the Greeks and Romans to be threatened by the Jewish faith and later the emergence of Christ's Gospel.

Psalm 139 is a celebrative hymn to God's sovereignty and providence. God is proclaimed to be both all powerful and all-knowing. Nothing subverts God, nothing escapes God. But instead of being intimidated by God's intrusive ways, the Psalmist oddly takes comfort in God knowing everything about him.

Normally when we realize someone else knows our deepest desires, greatest fears and darkest secrets we're intimidated. But the Psalmist came to realize God's intimate knowledge of him was a blessing.

Speaking personally, reading Psalm 139 leaves me feeling both uncomfortable and relieved because I'm left with the assurance that even though I'm completely known, I'm completely loved.

Isn't it tragic that so many people go through life trying to hide themselves because they're afraid of being "found out?" Consequently, they deny themselves meaningful relationships only to be left feeling unnoticed, unappreciated and unloved, hardly experiencing any intimacy or affirmation, unless they are finally encouraged to let their guard down and let themselves become known and loved.

Certainly the Psalmist's intention was to communicate to these people that being searched and known by God is a good thing. But accepting this invitation sooner than later brings on the growing pains. God isn't content being a neutral observer of our thoughts and behaviors, instead God desires our transformation. Admittedly, sometimes God becomes aggressive, getting in your face and under your skin. God can be tenacious like a blood hound in hot pursuit, but it's all for our own good.

*You hem me in, behind and before...
and you lay your hand on me...
Where can I go from your spirit?
or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
If I make my bed in Shéol, you are there;
If I...settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me
and your right hand shall hold me fast.*

(Psalm 139:5-10)

But we're not always trying to hide from God. Sometimes we just get lost, or at least we feel lost, and afraid that maybe God has given up on us.

The Psalmist assures us otherwise. Even when the darkness overcomes us we're still promised our darkest night is God's brightest day.

The Psalmist then goes on,

For it was you who formed my inward parts

*you knit me together in my mother's
womb.*

*I praise you for I am fearfully and
wonderfully made.*

(Psalm 139:13-14)

The same God who created the heavens and the earth tenderly formed each of us in our mothers' wombs. Even before modern medical science discovered DNA the Psalmist marveled at the complex mysteries of the human body. I love his choice of words,

*"I am fearfully and wonderfully made."
...when I was being made in secret
your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
How weighty to me are your thoughts O
God.*

*How vast is the sum of them...
they are more than the sand.*

(Psalm 139:14-18)

Can you sense the Psalmist's enjoyable bewilderment? The more he contemplates the mystery of life and himself, the more he's astounded by God, so far beyond us yet so close to us. Before we think God knows our thoughts, before we speak, God heard our voices and no matter how far off we wander, God's already there waiting for us.

The assurances of Psalm 139 become even more focused and wonderful when we put it all in the context of Christ and his Gospel. When God decided to become one of us, he put on a human face so when we see Jesus we experience God through the mystery of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection. The same God who searches and knows us also suffered and died for us to reconcile us to himself. When we know Jesus, we especially don't need to fear being searched and known because now we know it's for our health and salvation. We also come to realize God doesn't want to be judge, jury and executioner - instead Christ becomes our advocate who sacrificed himself by taking our guilt with him on the cross.

Listen to what St. Paul wrote to the Colossian Church as he lifts up the Supremacy of Christ: *"He is the image of the invisible God...for in him all things on heaven and earth were created, things visible and invisible...in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things...by making peace through the blood of the cross. (Colossians 1:15-16; 19-20)*

Today you're being encouraged to let Christ search and know you so you can then search and know yourself. Let it happen so you can see whatever God wants you to see, the good and the bad, your strengths and weaknesses, your gifts and talents. There's truth

to the saying, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Without the intentional inward journey there can be no significant outward journey to satisfy your deepest longings.

Learning to know yourself helps you to know God’s will and purpose for your life. When you know yourself, you become comfortable in your own skin and you discover that divine spark and inner authority God gave you.

Make the Psalmist’s brave prayer your own,

*“Search me O God, and know my heart
test me and know my thoughts
See if there is any wicked way in me
and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

(Psalm 139:22-23)