

This morning we carry on in our study of the psalms and we arrive at Psalm 139.

Probably not one of the most well known psalms and yet you'll probably hear some phrases that you'll recognize but didn't know where they're from.

Let's read through it.

Psalm 139

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 O Lord, you have examined my heart
and know everything about me.
- 2 You know when I sit down or stand up.
You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.
- 3 You see me when I travel
and when I rest at home.
You know everything I do.
- 4 You know what I am going to say
even before I say it, Lord.
- 5 You go before me and follow me.
You place your hand of blessing on my head.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too great for me to understand!

- 7 I can never escape from your Spirit!
I can never get away from your presence!
- 8 If I go up to heaven, you are there;
if I go down to the grave,[a] you are there.
- 9 If I ride the wings of the morning,
if I dwell by the farthest oceans,
- 10 even there your hand will guide me,
and your strength will support me.
- 11 I could ask the darkness to hide me
and the light around me to become night—
- 12 but even in darkness I cannot hide from you.
To you the night shines as bright as day.
Darkness and light are the same to you.

- 13 You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body
and knit me together in my mother's womb.
- 14 Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!
Your workmanship is marvellous—how well I know it.
- 15 You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion,
as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.
- 16 You saw me before I was born.
Every day of my life was recorded in your book.
Every moment was laid out
before a single day had passed.
- 17 How precious are your thoughts about me,[b] O God.
They cannot be numbered!
- 18 I can't even count them;
they outnumber the grains of sand!
And when I wake up,
you are still with me!

19 O God, if only you would destroy the wicked!
Get out of my life, you murderers!
20 They blaspheme you;
your enemies misuse your name.
21 O Lord, shouldn't I hate those who hate you?
Shouldn't I despise those who oppose you?
22 Yes, I hate them with total hatred,
for your enemies are my enemies.
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
24 Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

Psalm 139
For the choir director:

So even though it seems like a very personal psalm of an individual's intimacy with God, at some point the writer decided it should be sung publicly by a group.

A psalm of David.

And we know it was written by King David.
David is one of those amazing characters. It seems like he would need three lifetimes to fit in all his experiences.

He begins life as the youngest son of a large rural family and is left out in the fields to take care of the flocks of sheep at a young age.

This quiet life is broken when the great prophet Samuel stops by and anoints him to be a future king of Israel. And when all the excitement of that is done, he's sent back into the fields. Someone's got to take care of the sheep.

Later he's called out of the field to take food and supplies to his brothers who are part of the army of king Saul, the first king of Israel. The army is being harassed and mocked by an army of Philistines who dominated this area when Israel comes out of Egypt, and will continue to dominate throughout David's life.
One of the men in that army is Goliath, a giant. And we know how that ends.

David achieves Rock Star status and becomes a military leader with so much popularity that King Saul, out of jealousy, tries to kill him many times. But David remains loyal to the king.

He goes on for several years walking this tightrope of being part of the king's court, marrying the king's daughter, being best friends with the king's son, the heir to the throne, and then for a while he's hiding in caves because the king wants him dead.
A classic example of work-place stress.

Not until king Saul is killed in battle does David accept the crown, unites Israel, does some great things, does some terrible things.

And yet through it all David learns from the situation and for the most part remains brutally honest with God and with his people.

Through poetry he carries on this dialogue with God throughout his life, and even though some of his poems are very personal, he circulates them freely and has the priests sing them as part of worship. And we find that he is not only a brutal warrior, a great tactician but also a very deep thinker, and a very sensitive soul.

He's the first politician to have a twitter account and let everybody know what he's thinking.

And so we have psalm 139 to give us insight into how this man viewed his life and his world.

In this song we find four stanzas, six verses long, each with a different theme.

And as we'll see each of those stanzas takes us little closer to God, encourages us more about the greatness of God, and challenges us more to be open to God and to submit to His greatness.

One of the things I love about this psalm is that it presents such a complete picture of God and yet also makes various statements that will mean more to different people in cultures and at different times in human history.

So this morning we are going to do an overview of the text but also focus in on some of the statements that may be more relevant to our situation.

The first stanza:

- 1 O Lord, you have examined my heart
and know everything about me.
- 2 You know when I sit down or stand up.
You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.
- 3 You see me when I travel
and when I rest at home.
You know everything I do.
- 4 You know what I am going to say
even before I say it, Lord.
- 5 You go before me and follow me.
You place your hand of blessing on my head.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too great for me to understand!

The God of My Daily Life

vs1 God is interactive with me - He examines me, thinks about me

vs 2-3 Unlike the idols of the surrounding nations, this God is omnipresent, not hidden in a temple

Travel and Rest; sometimes translated as "going out and lying down" - 'lying down' can be taken to mean sleep but can also mean marital intimacy.
In my most public and in my most private - I am not hidden from God.

This is good news and yet at times, challenging.

We live at a time that technology allows us to live very splintered lives. We can drive an hour to go to work. Work with a community of people we never encounter outside of work. We've got

certain friends on our sports team, certain friends we go to church with, we've got our family at home, and a seemingly endless numbers of communities we're part of online.

I'm not just talking about the temptation towards hypocrisy.

That's a simple issue and it's just too easy to accuse people of that.

I'm talking about the sense that we are splintered. That I'm trying to do my best as all of these different people and it's exhausting.

I have to keep my boss happy even though she doesn't really care that I was up all night with a sick kid or that I'm exhausted this week because I just coached my kids team in a big tournament.

I should have fixed this in the house and done this with my kids and I shouldn't have to make excuses to my family about having a big project at work.

We're an acrobat without a net. If I make a mistake at work it won't matter how good I'm doing everywhere else. I fall. If I make a mistake as a parent it won't matter how good I'm doing everywhere else. I fall.

I think it's easy to understand why we might be tempted to do something at work we won't do anywhere else. I feel like I'm just giving and giving and why shouldn't I do something just for me.

When I'm at work it's hard to remember that I'm also a father, a coach, a brother, a husband. Who am I?

David's answer is not easy but it's clear. Is he a warrior, a king, a politician, a father, a poet? He IS God's.

There is someone who cares about him, understands him, and is with him when he's among soldiers, or princes, or his children, or his wives. God is the one person that ties his whole life together.

And ultimately God is the only one he has to please.

And of all the people in all the communities he's a part of, God is the most forgiving.

Take a deep breath David. You are God's.

In Acts we see Paul presenting the same idea to some Greek philosophers.

Acts 17:27-29. "His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' And since this is true, we shouldn't think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone."

Hebrews 4:13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.

The God of My Daily Life

Once David is convinced that God is all knowing in the physical world he moves on to the spirit world.

The God of My Spiritual Life

7 I can never escape from your Spirit!
I can never get away from your presence!
8 If I go up to heaven, you are there;
if I go down to the grave, you are there.
9 If I ride the wings of the morning,
if I dwell by the farthest oceans,
10 even there your hand will guide me,
and your strength will support me.
11 I could ask the darkness to hide me
and the light around me to become night—
12 but even in darkness I cannot hide from you.
To you the night shines as bright as day.
Darkness and light are the same to you.

It's amazing how much power we sometimes think we have. You talk to people about the spirit world and the after-life and you hear some pretty interesting things. You hear things like, "I believe if you think positive things and do positive things then your afterlife will be positive."
"Heaven and hell is what ever you think it's going to be."

I can't make myself taller, grow more teeth, change the colour of my eyes. I certainly don't trust me to create my own afterlife. Or to have the power to redecorate it once I get there. The spirit world exists, God is there and I am at his mercy.

And there's only ONE spirit world.

There's a very common idea about heaven and hell that we see represented in cartoons and comics and movies: that there are two spirit worlds. There's heaven where God's in charge and there's hell where Satan's in charge. (I can think of a bunch of hilarious Far Side comics.) God is on a throne in heaven. Satan is on a Thorne in hell. God chooses what happens to you in heaven. Satan chooses what happens to you in hell.

The Bible leaves no question that that is not true. There is only one throne and God is on it. And hell is not Satan's domain, he is prisoner number one.

Philippians 2:9-11. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

People my jokingly say, "I'd rather go to hell than spend eternity bowing down to Jesus." Sorry. The two are not mutually exclusive.

When Jesus is fully revealed and God is fully known, all of creation will instinctively recognize him and bow. No one will be forced to bow. It will be a natural response to His greatness. And some will do it in a place of blessing and intimacy with God and some will do it in a place of shame and separateness from God but God is the God of the whole spirit world. HE is the

God and master of hell and heaven and Satan will have no domain or power. That's why he's doing all he can to prevent God's final plan.

David knows that God is the God of the whole spirit world and therefor the God of his spiritual life.

So David explain how God is
The God of My Daily Life
and
The God of My Spiritual Life
And the reason he knows that is because God is

The Source of the Physical and Spiritual World.

13 You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body
and knit me together in my mother's womb.
14 Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!
Your workmanship is marvellous—how well I know it.
15 You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion,
as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.
16 You saw me before I was born.
Every day of my life was recorded in your book.
Every moment was laid out
before a single day had passed.
17 How precious are your thoughts about me, O God.
They cannot be numbered!
18 I can't even count them;
they outnumber the grains of sand!
And when I wake up,
you are still with me!

This stanza again has an emphasis that is of particular importance to us.
For the last few hundred years people have set out to prove that everything that exists does so because of a cosmic process that had no idea or power behind it other than nature itself.

I like science. Science is good - when it follows its own rules.

But when someone says something like, "We know that 3.5 billion years ago..." That is bad science. "About 2.5 million years ago..." That is not a scientific statement.

A scientific statement would be something like, "According to some theories, it is possible that 3.5 billion years ago..."

A good scientific statement would be, "According to some theories, it is possible that 3.5 billion years ago... However, other theories..."

Most people who believe they have scientifically proven there is no creator have fallen for two disastrous mistakes:

One is they have eliminated a possible answer before they conduct their studies. They have decide that no matter what they dig up, they will not accept 'a creator' as a possible answer. That is terrible science.

Imagine trying to do math when you have been taught your whole life that 4 doesn't exist. You can still do a lot of good math but every now and then you've got a problem whose answer is somewhere between 3.999 and 5. We're close on this one. We just need a little more funding. Or imagine exploring an island and deciding before hand that nothing you find will lead you to believe that humans have ever been here before. So trees, rocks, animals, water. All very good. But then you come through the jungle, pull back the branches and before you is a 747. Somehow either it flew here on its own or it spontaneously formed itself out of the metals and minerals in these rocks.

To study creation, to see the balance of elements and forces, to consider the minute details of reproduction, or to determine how many interactive parts there must be just so you can see, and yet to exclude the possibility of intention or design is simply unscientific.

The other mistake is to ignore evidence that brings your theory into question. There is evidence from various sources that humans and dinosaurs lived at the same time. "No, no. We aren't going to include that, not going to look at that, not going to accept that because it doesn't fit into the conclusions we've already come to." Unscientific.

For much of the last few centuries. Christians struggled with this. For many of them it seemed like when they went to university they had to leave their Bibles at home, and when they went to Church they had to leave their brains at home.

Now I don't mean any disrespect for past generations. I admire them for clinging to their faith even though they would be mocked and even though they may not have an answers for proper who seemed so much smarter than them.

But we no longer need to do that.

We now have a few generations of well educated, well trained scientists, leaders in their fields, who take their Bibles seriously and have a saving faith in Jesus Christ, and have given us legitimate, scientific answers to many of the questions our ancestors shied away from.

If this is an area that has challenged you or shamed you then thanks to the internet and quality bookstores you go home after church today, and before supper tonight you can have a new appreciation for your creator and the world he has given you.

And is it important?

Let's look at a few verses from various parts of Scripture:

Ecclesiastes 12:1 Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honour him in your youth before you grow old and say, "Life is not pleasant anymore."

Isaiah 17:7 Then at last the people will look to their Creator and turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 40:28 Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding.

Jeremiah 10:16 But the God of Israel is no idol! He is the Creator of everything that exists, including Israel, his own special possession. The Lord of Heaven's Armies is his name!

Romans 1:25 They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

Colossians 1:15. Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation.

Colossians 1:17 He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.

Now I mentioned there are good Christian scientists working in this field but be careful - you'll always find some imbalanced quacks. You'll come across people who think it's our duty to prove the world is wrong. To defeat their every argument. To shame them into joining us. Pray for those people and get off their websites before they start wading you weekly updates.

We must never think that proving someone wrong is the same as leading them to Jesus.

I've had friends who think they're going to convert people by disproving their theories. (MAybe I've been one of them at times.). "You think this? Well I can prove this. You believe that? Well I know that. What else have you got? Oh yeah? Well how about this!!!"
That is not evangelism. That's bullying.

The only reason to help people know there is a creator is to help them understand they are loved and wanted.

Their shape, their height, their colour, what they have in common with everyone else and what is unique to them - those are choices made for them by their creator because that's how He wanted them. In their mother's womb, God was present and He was involved in their development, and they're special and unique to Him. They are wonderful because they are the intentional creation of a wonderful creator. They are of value.

And beyond being physical miracles we are more than that.
When you become followers of Jesus,

"Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honour God with your body." 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

So God is
The God of My Daily Life
and
The God of My Spiritual Life
and
The Source of the Physical and Spiritual World.

Now, how does David say we should respond to this God?

19 O God, if only you would destroy the wicked!
Get out of my life, you murderers!
20 They blaspheme you;
your enemies misuse your name.
21 O Lord, shouldn't I hate those who hate you?
Shouldn't I despise those who oppose you?
22 Yes, I hate them with total hatred,
for your enemies are my enemies.

A word of warning: David is speaking as the King of the Promised Land. This is God's personal back yard. As the Hebrews moved into it they were supposed to remove or destroy people who were committing child sacrifice and worshipping temple prostitutes. In David's kingdom that process is still going on. But that was the only time and place when that command was even by God.

When God sent people into Egypt he never told them to tear down temples and convert the locals. Many prophets warned them about going into exile in Assyria and Babylon and Persia but not one prophet told them when they get there they should wipe out the heathen, kill the priests, rip down temples.

And when the church was assent out into all kinds of countries and all kinds of cities that had all kinds of violence and idolatry, they are never told to defeat the locals, prove the locals wrong, force the locals to convert, stop the sinners from sinning.

In all of those cases they were given 2 commands: Live the truth and speak the truth. Live holy lives and preach the gospel.

So is there anything in 19-22 that applies to us? All of it.

We hate injustice and sin. We speak for and stand up for those who are suffering. Hate the things God hates. Love the things God loves. Live the way God would live if he were among us because as we've just seen, HE IS.

Jesus said, "I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves." Matthew 10:16
That is the balance we must find.

The presence of - The God of My Daily Life
The desires of - The God of My Spiritual Life
and the power of - The Source of the Physical and Spiritual World

Leave me wanting to please him and participate in His world.

NOT because he needs our help but because he's our dad and like little kids we want to be involved when he washes the car or paints the fence and he wants us to be involved even if we make a mess that he has to clean up.

He is our God and we are His people and laying our lives before Him is the most logical and obvious thing we can do.

But always, always, always know that He is watching US not just THEM, He has expectations of US not just THEM.

And so all of these big ideas lead us to a very simple conclusion:

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
24 Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.