

Sermon Notes

# WORSHIP SERVICE -

## 12.29.2024

# PSALM 139 - KNOWN BY GOD

## I. INTRODUCTION

### **Psalm 139:1-24**

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!

- This is a psalm of David. We've emphasized how David prefigures Christ as from his lineage the greater son of David comes, the Messiah.
- As with all the psalms, we interpret this one in light of its ultimate fulfillment in Christ.
- He is the only one who can perfectly sing and pray this psalm.
- And only those who are in Christ and know Christ can find real comfort in this psalm and pray and sing this psalm with joy.
- The psalm divides into two main sections.
- The first main section (vv1-18) contains three, six-verse stanzas of David's praise for God's attributes.
- The second main section contains one, six-verse stanza, which is David's prayer.

## II. GOD INTIMATELY KNOWS ME

- V1 O Lord, you have searched me and known me!
- In this opening line, David details God's comprehensive knowledge of him.
- When we speak of God's knowledge we call this attribute of God, omniscience.
- God is all-knowing. His knowledge is complete, exhaustive, and comprehensive.
- His knowledge doesn't come from inspection, investigation, study, or observation.
- Nothing catches God by surprise. Nothing is hidden before him.
- But notice, it is not just God's omniscience that David is praising.
- It is God's perfect knowledge of him that David is praising.
- "You have searched and known me."
- Yahweh, the Lord, knows him completely apart from any investigation or observation.
- The two verbs, "searched" and "known" are both in the same tense indicating something that began in the past and continues in the present.
- God knows everything about David, has always known everything about David, and will always know everything about David.

### EVERY ACTION

- In v2-4 David describes what God knows specifically and in complete detail.
- "You know..." is in the perfect tense, which could be translated as, "you have always known and still know."
- God knows all of David's actions, thoughts, ways, and words.
- "When I sit down and when I rise up" is a literary device called a merism, the two opposing words or phrases form the bookends which stand for those things and everything in between. (e.g. cradle to the grave; for better or worse.)
- All of David's movements are known to the Lord.

### EVERY THOUGHT AND WAY

- "You discern my thoughts from afar."
- Not only does the Lord know his movements, but he also knows David's motivations.
- Hebrews 4:12-13 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- It's not just the actions and works of man that are known to God, but the very thoughts and intentions of our heart.
- He knows not just what we do but why we do it, even though we don't understand why we do some of the things that we do.
- "From afar" is an expression of God's transcendence. God is far above his creation.
- Yet, God intimately knows every single detail of his creation and his knowledge is unlimited and boundless.
- "My path and my lying down" is another merism for the whole of life.
- God knows David's travels and when he is at rest. All of his ways are known to the Lord.
- That sums up the scope of God's knowledge, it is intimate and complete.

#### EVERY WORD

- The Lord even knows what David is going to say before he even opens his mouth to say it.
- Things don't need to happen first for God to know them.
- All of David's future utterances are always present before the Lord.

#### GOD'S PROTECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

- V4 David confesses that he is fully known by God—*"you hem me in, behind and before..."*
- "Behind and before" is another merism, the past and the future.
- "You hem me in..." - God's hand of protection is upon David throughout every detail of his life, every action, every way, every thought, every unspoken word is known to God, and God's hand is there to hold and guide David through his life.
- All of this meditation on God's omniscience and perfect, intimate knowledge of David causes him to be overwhelmed.
- "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me..."
- And he declares "it is high; I cannot attain it."
- God's knowledge is far beyond any human comprehension.
- How comforting is God's omniscience to his people.
- Everything about your life is known to God. We can be our real, authentic selves before him, because there is nothing we can hide from him.
- We can freely confess things to him because he already knows those things even before we confess them.
- 1 John 3:19-20 By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; 20 for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.
- He knows you better than you will ever know yourself and he knows every secret thing about you that others do not know.
- And if you are in Christ, none of that intimate knowledge he has of you causes him to love you any less.
- And this is so comforting when we come before God in prayer. We can pray with confidence that our all-knowing God, who sees things perfectly will always answer prayer perfectly.
- Because we don't know everything that God knows, we can't possibly know what the right answer to our prayers ought to be—but he does.

### III. GOD IS CONTINUALLY WITH ME

- V7 Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

- Just as David ponders God's omniscience, he ponders God's omnipresence.
  - Just as God's knowledge is boundless, so is God's presence.
  - God is everywhere in every place all at once.
  - He is fully present everywhere.
  - There is no place David is where God's presence is not.
  - He uses another series of merisms; if David were to ascend to the heavens or descend to Sheol (the lowest parts of the earth) — God is there.
  - Heaven and the grave, and everything in between, God's presence is there.
  - "Wings of the morning" and the "uttermost parts of the sea" is an expression of horizontal direction, east to west.
  - What David is expressing is that from the highest point in creation to the lowest, from the farthest east to the farthest west, and all of the places in between, there is nowhere David can be, or no place where he can be taken, or no place he can try to run to, where God's loving presence is not there!
  - V10 Even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.
  - David's conviction is that wherever he is, God's hand shall lead him and hold him fast because God is with him—he is there!
  - It's not just that God is everywhere, it's that God is with him everywhere.
- V11-12 David expresses how even if something overwhelming were to happen to him, even if he were gripped by darkness, even then, God is with him!
- Darkness means terror and death.
  - But David's conviction is that because God is continually with him, the darkness cannot ever quench the light of God's presence.
  - He is the God who dwells in unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16), darkness can never have the last word when it concerns the child of God who is ever before the presence of God.
  - Andrew Bonar, in his commentary on the psalms wrote, "*What a comforting thought to a believer! If God's eye is on me, then I am blessed, though I be obscure, and though I suffer unheeded by man. He is with the prisoner in the Inquisition, with the soldier, the sailor, the miner; yes, he is so truly with his saints, that wherever their dust may be laid, he will find it, and gathering every particle from the dark grave, will raise up therefrom a glorious body.*"
- When we consider these glorious attributes of God, we may be tempted to think that this all-knowing, everywhere present divine being would be distant and aloof. But he is far from that.
  - At Christ's incarnation, in the person of the Son, the omnipresent God took on human flesh, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.
  - The omnipresent God of glory, who cannot be contained in a temple, who cannot be constrained to a place, submitted himself to the darkness of our world by coming in the form of a baby.
  - The King of glory was shrouded by darkness on the cross, and it seemed like the darkness would extinguish the one who is the light of the world.
  - But on the third day, bathed in resurrection light he rose again.
- We can be comforted in the knowledge that God is with us, even in what seems to be darkness to us.
  - In whatever trouble we find ourselves in, in suffering and hardship, He is there!
  - Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they

comfort me.

- We are never alone!

## IV. GOD WONDERFULLY MADE ME

- David ponders God's omniscience, his omnipresence, and now his omnipotence.
- He reflects on God's powerful act of creation, but David focuses on God's creation of him personally.
- There is perhaps no greater passage in Scripture that speaks so powerfully about the sanctity of human life.
- V13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
- David praises God for the wonderful creation that he is, as God, formed, knitted, and intricately wove David in his mother's womb.
- Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."
- David praises God because of his fearsome work in creation. He acknowledges that he himself is "wonderfully made."
- "My soul knows it very well." The Creator is worthy of all praise! We should praise him.
- Do you see yourself as a wonderful work of God?
- Do you see your life as one of having purpose and special value because you were wonderfully made by your loving Creator?
  
- David affirms that God saw him even as he was being made in secret. His frame was not hidden from God.
- There are realities unseen by people but are known only to God.
- Scripture is quite clear that the life in the womb is being shaped and grown by the divine hand.
- The life in the womb is a wonderful work of God.
- An unborn child is a human life, with a soul, and to kill that life in the womb is murder!
- Each baby in the womb is to be protected from harm and valued.
- A life should not be taken by one's own hand in suicide or by being euthanized.
  
- Here's what this means, no one is an accident, no one is a mistake.
- From God's perspective, no one is unwanted.
- It is the very God of creation who orchestrated your conception.
- V16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance..."
- God sees the life throughout every stage of development in the womb.
  
- V16 introduces the reality that God has preordained all of David's days.
- "In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."
- The book is figurative for God's purposed, preordained plan, and David says that God's plan extends to every day of his whole life.
- Just as God knew every action David would take, every thought, every word before he even spoke it, so God knew every day David would live before it happened.
- God formed his days, figuratively expressed as being written in God's book, because God would purpose what would happen in David's life.
- This does not nullify human responsibility.
- Scripture teaches both God's sovereign, predestined plan and human responsibility and choice, these are not opposed to one another even if we don't understand it fully.

- What David is affirming and recognizing is that God is God. He is Creator.
- David is comforted in the knowledge that God made him and is directing his life according to God's purposed plan for him.
- God knows every day of his life.
- God knows every day of YOUR life.
  
- Think of how the Father lovingly knit together the incarnate Son in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit.
- Every day of Jesus's life was preordained by God, even his suffering and the day of his crucifixion.
- Every one of our days is known by God and preordained by God.
- When David considers this truth, he declares that God's aims, his intentions for him, are precious.
- V17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast the sum of them!
- The thoughts he has in view are God's thoughts about him, the days God has formed for him and written in his book.
- Because God has firmly fixed David's life and purposed his life, he can sleep in peace, knowing that when he awakes, God is still with him and he is still with God for the Lord holds him fast.
  
- We can trust and believe in the promises made to us in Christ.
- Romans 8:28-30 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.
- If God has purposed that for us, if we have been called according to his purpose, he will not abandon us, he will never leave us nor forsake us.
- We should sleep peacefully, knowing the Lord will sustain us and bring us all the way to glory.

## V. A CALL TO SELF-EXAMINATION

- V19-22 David professes his allegiance to the Lord and his zeal for God.
- He is asking God to act in his righteous justice, to slay the wicked. The wicked are those who speak against God with malicious intent, those who take God's name in vain.
- We have to read this with Psalm 2 in mind.
- The Word of God and devotion to the Lord have so shaped David's emotions that he hates what God hates, he hates those who hate the Lord. He loathes those who rise up against the Lord.
- David is displaying passionate and resolute loyalty to the God who knows him, who is with him and who has formed him.
- He hates them with complete hatred, he counts them as enemies.
- We must first remember that only Jesus could pray this perfectly, without sin in his heart.
- He knows all things perfectly, he knows the heart of those who speak against him with malicious intent, those who are false. He truly knows who are enemies of God.
- "Zeal for your house will consume me." (Psalm 69:9; John 2:17)
- Jesus had perfect zeal and devotion to the Father.
  
- In Christ, we pray this modeling the pattern of prayer Jesus gave his disciples, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in

heaven.”

- We want the rule and reign of King Jesus manifested here on earth just as he rules and reigns in heaven.
- We should love what the Lord loves and hate what the Lord hates.
- Jesus commends the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2 because they hate the works of the Nicolaitans which he also hates (Rev. 2:6).
- James 4:4 Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
- Are you on the Lord’s side? Are you a friend of the world or a friend of the Lord?
- Do you realize that everything written in vv1-16 is true of every human being ever born, not just Christians.
- But for those who live apart from Christ, the truths about who God is and how everything is known to him, about his presence being everywhere, about his crafting of every human being, this is a terrifying reality. There will be judgment and a day of reckoning for those who do not turn to Christ.
- But those who are in Christ, who know Christ, who have a clear conscience, we can pray and sing this with joy.
  
- But David isn’t just asking the Lord to deal with the wicked around him, but for God to also deal with anything wicked in him.
- After declaring that the Lord has searched and known him, and knows his thoughts, he prays for the Lord to search and know his heart and to know his thoughts.
- David wants the Lord to root out anything in him that sympathizes with the world and the enemies of God.
- He wants the Lord to diagnose his heart and see if there is anything “grievous” in him.
- He asks God to lead him in the way everlasting, the path of life.
  
- We too should ask the Lord to examine our heart.
- Because we know that Jesus prayed this prayer before the Father with a clear conscience, and his prayer was heard and answered, we can pray this safely.
- Ask God to root out any rebel ways, any specific areas of your life where you sympathize with the world, anywhere you want to build your own kingdom apart from God’s, any thoughts and views that align with the world and not with His Word.
- Ask God to purify you, to cleanse you, to make you holy as he is holy.
- Ask God to help you live in light of the truths that He intimately knows you, he is continually with you, he wonderfully made you and find comfort in those truths.
- Ask God to lead you in the way everlasting. To lead you in the life that Christ has graciously provided for you.
- Pray, Your kingdom come, your will be done in me, as it is in heaven!

## **APPLICATION AND REFLECTION**

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?