

No Place to Hide

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Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

- [0 : 00] We're going to begin our service with the singing of the words of Psalm 139.
- These words are taken from the CD performed in heaven. O Lord, thou hast me searched and known, thou knowest my sitting down and rising up.
- Yea, all my thoughts afar to thee are known. My footsteps and my lying down, thou compasses always. Thou also most entirely art acquainted with all my ways.
- For in my tongue before I speak, not any word can be. But altogether, O Lord, it is well known to thee. Behind before thou hast beset, and laid on me thine hand.
- Such knowledge is too strange for me, too high to understand. From thy spirit whither shall I go, or from thy presence fly?
- [1 : 09] Ascend I heaven, lo thou art there, there if in hell I lie. Take I the morning wings, and dwell in utmost parts of sea.
- Even there, Lord, shall thy hand me lead. Thy right hand hold shall me. And so on. These verses from the beginning of Psalm 139.
- O Lord, thou hast me searched and known. Thou knowest my sitting down, and lighted up, In all my thoughts afar to thee are known.
- My footsteps and my lying down, thou compasses always.
- Thou also most entirely art, thou hast me seen. Thou also most entirely art, thou hast me seen. Thou great with all my ways.
- [2 : 43] Thou have made, thou hast me seen. Thou are in my heart, before I see.
- Thou have made, thou hast me seen. Thou have made, thou hast me seen. CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS
- CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS In air, Lord, shall thy hand be.
- Thy life and hope shall be. Let us join together in prayer.
- Let us pray. And have a blessed God we give thanks for the way in which these words remind us of the fact that you are always nearby.
- [5 : 22] That is never an occasion when we are by ourselves. And even when we do feel cast down and forlorn and abandoned by those closest to us.
- Even when events conspire against us and we may feel ourselves bereft of all creaturely comfort.
- The presence of the creator is promised. So that there is no time and no place where we cannot be fully convinced of the fact that you are there in that place.

Your people, even those that have discovered much concerning your goodness to them. They took their journey and often times they felt that that journey was one that they took alone.

We know of your servant Jacob that at some point in his wilderness sojourned. He came to a place and in the darkness of the night he discovered a truth that perhaps never left him.

[6 : 41] And his confession was that truly this was in another place than the house of God and the gates of heaven.

He was found on holy ground because in that very place you met with him and made yourself known to him. As he wrestled with the angel during the darkness.

We give thanks for the way in which your people are sometimes confronted with these truths. Truths that are ancient.

Truths that in and of themselves have antiquity. Because they are contained within the scriptures. And they speak of events and occasions within the realms and echelons of time.

Times that have passed and years and decades and centuries have overtaken this world. And these events may be a dim, distant memory.

[7 : 51] And yet they are recorded for us in the scripture. And your very people knew of them. Perhaps in the passing they had taken note of them. But the truth that they contained was in some measure forgotten.

Until such time as you once again revealed that truth to them. And reminded them that you had not changed. And your word was a permanent reality.

A fixture that was unchanging. And the promises that were within it were all concerning the provision that you had provided for our people.

Who bore your name in this world. Even such as would be saved by grace through Christ Jesus. We bring before you this day our cares and concerns.

And ask your blessing to be upon all who are huge people in the world. We commit them to your care and keeping. And ask that you would bless them body and soul.

[8 : 58] That you would remind them through your word. Of the fact that you are able to do for them what no man can do. We bless you and thank you that you can visit them.

Where their need is most great. Be it temporal or spiritual. We remember those of that number who bear your name in the world.

That you might remember them as we bring them before you in prayer. Remembering those in hospital.

Remembering those who are in beds of illness at home. Remembering those who have illnesses of varying descriptions. Be they of an enduring nature.

Or be they harbingers of death as they speak. Of the frailty of our temporal bodies. Every one of us. Has it within themselves.

[10 : 01] Each one of us. We are here. Reminded that. We are but creatures of the dust. Our breath. Is something that will. Very quickly.

Expire. And there will be no inspiration. There will be no drawing of breath. Following that. We acknowledge that. Your word speaks of such a time.

Awaiting each one who belong in this world. Our sojourn is an earthly one but a short one. And we give thanks for all who have achieved old age.

And we pray for them. As these years are taking their toll. That you would be with them. In the weakness of their bodies. May the inner man be confirmed.

Strengthened. And that they may be reminded of the fact that. Your people. Are those who. Are going to go from strength to strength.

[11 : 03] Until. Until. They appear in Zion. According to the promise. We remember those who are yet to be numbered amongst them. And pray for their mercy.

For mercy to be shown to them. And that they might be. Face to face with Christ. And that their. The longings of their soul would be met by him. We pray that you would bless your word to that end.

Whoever would hear it. And whatever means. You use to bring. The word of life before us. May it be blessed to that end. So that Christ would be magnified.

And the souls of those who. Come to trust in him. That they would be enriched. We remember this world in its entirety. With all the varying needs that are before you in it.

Especially at this time of. Of uncertainty. We pray for those who have succumbed to the virus. That is prevalent in our midst. Throughout our nation.

[12 : 05] And the nations of the earth. Lord we pray for healing. We pray for a remedy. We pray for wisdom to be given to those. Who are dealing with the aftermath.

Of this virus. As it affects so many. Remembering young. Middle aged. And the elderly. Remembering those who care. For those who have. As have come to it.

As we said. Bless nurses. And doctors. And carers. Of all descriptions. We pray that you would remember them. In their labours.

That you would keep them safe. As they so engage. With the task. Entrusted to them. Remember our governments. And we pray for the first minister. Pray for the prime minister.

Pray for the queen. The royal household. Remember the various. The parts of the. Civil. Forces.

[13 : 03] That are responsible. For keeping care. Keeping peace. Within the land. The police force. The ambulance services. The various. Ancillary services.

That. That are entrusted with. Delivering care. When others. Are unable to provide it. So continue with us. We pray. Remembering the nations.

Of the earth. And all their own. Needs. Whatever they may be. In some cases. There is. War. In some cases. There is famine. In some cases.

There is disease. And. Desperate. Situations. Abound. And only the God of grace. Can. Alleviate suffering. And to that end.

We pray. That you would remember. All such. That you people. Would be a praying people. And that you would. Sanctify. Every visitation. In providence. To us. Cleansing us.

[13 : 58] Each one. Guiding us. To the one. Who is. The prince of life. Lifting up his name. Before us. As the name. That is above every name. And that the star.

Of David. The prince. Of peace. The one. Who is. Able to. Supply. Your needs. In. This world. And beyond. He is in his name.

Cleansing from sin. Amen. We're going to hear the word of God. And we're going to read from the psalm that we were. That we heard sing.

Sung. Psalm 139. We can read the whole psalm as we have it in the book of Psalms. O Lord. Thou hast me searched and known.

Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising. Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down.

[14 : 56] Thou hast be set me behind and before.

And laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high. I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit?

Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

If I say surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day.

[15 : 57] The darkness and the light are both alike to thee. For thou hast possessed my reins. Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from me, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect. And in thy book all my members were written. Thine eyes did see my soul, and that my soul was made in secret, and that my soul was made in secret.

And as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me. O God, how great is the sum of them. If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand.

When I am awake, I am still with thee. Surely thou wilt slay the wicked. O God, depart from me, therefore ye bloody men.

[17 : 07] For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them? O Lord, that hate thee.

O Lord, that hate thee. And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies.

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me.

And lead me in the way everlasting. Amen, and may the Lord at his blessing to this reading of his word and to his name be the praise.

I'd like to turn for a short while to the words that we have read. And we can focus our attention, although we'll be considering parts of this arm, we can focus on verse 7 as a foundation for our service.

[18 : 22] Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? Whither shall I go from thy presence?

As you can appreciate, the words of our text are in the form of a question, albeit a rhetorical question. The author already knows the answer indeed.

And in fact, he has stated as much in the words leading up to this. The opening verses imply a personal, intimate knowledge that is only possible if the one who knows is not only present, but with the capacity to probe the deepest thoughts and feelings that the writer has.

As one person describes it, he is so complete in his knowledge that there is no hiding place from him, nor is there any time or condition from which he can be shut out.

The nature of spirit is that it is ubiquitous. I would imagine that what is meant there is that he is ubiquitous.

[19 : 52] Everywhere and always, omniscience results from omnipresence. As I said, I want to focus on this verse in particular and ask some questions about what is implied by the words.

First of all, what does the Bible say to us about God that should confirm the truth that is suggested here? Secondly, I would like to cite some examples from the Bible that confirm to us that truth.

Truth that is discovered by some on the basis of their own experience. And thirdly, we can think of some examples from the lives of some who thought they could escape from God.

And I suppose in conclusion we can't but remind ourselves of the futility of thinking that we can escape from God.

What does the Bible say to us about God that should confirm this truth to us? Well, as we already noticed, God is declared to be all-knowing and ever-present.

[21 : 17] And there are many corruptions of that idea within the world. And in many respects, these are contradictory. For example, within the world there are many societies that exist with a pantheon of gods.

These gods are considered deities, yet their sphere of influence is limited. In some cases we have a god of the underworld, or a god of the dead, and perhaps a god of the ocean, or a god of the sky.

And usually they are described as operating within their own sphere of influence, and nowhere else. We have the example of Egyptian mythology.

And Israel of old were exposed to that, and they were influenced by it in their own time in Egypt. And within Egypt there are over 500 so-called deities that appear and disappear over the centuries.

Now the god of scripture does not compete with any other god. He and he only is God.

[22 : 40] He describes himself as the great I am. What that means, the psalmist confesses, is too wonderful for him. Notice the words of verse 6.

Such knowledge, he says, is too wonderful for me. It is high. I cannot attain to it. The knowledge that God has given to him of himself, the knowledge that God declares that he possesses, is something that the finite mind finds difficult to comprehend.

But the truth concerning God often is. He is not only the source of all life, he maintains it. We live, move, and have our being in him, we are told.

He created man in his image, and breathed into him the breath of life, making man a living soul. This God who was there at the beginning, he was there before the beginning.

The prophet Jeremiah frequently makes mention of the truth concerning God's imminence. He tells us he is never far away.

[23 : 59] We read, Am I a god at hand, saith the Lord, and not a god afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him, saith the Lord?

Do not I fill the heavens and the earth, saith the Lord? We know that there came a time when the second person of the Holy Trinity took to himself human nature.

And as such, it necessarily means that physically he is embodied. and we are told that he, following the resurrection from the dead, ascended into glory, and he occupies glory physically.

He is the man, Christ Jesus. But it does not limit his divine presence. Before he experienced death on the cross, he had explained to his disciples how he was going to return to his heavenly Father.

And he said, I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive.

[25 : 21] Because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. Then we have the wonderful words of benediction that he gave prior to his ascension.

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. There are many other examples that we could take from the Scripture that confirm to us and remind us of the very fact that this God is a God who is all-powerful.

His power and his omniscience and his omnipresence knit together into one.

But I said I would mention some examples from the Bible where the awareness is given of the ongoing presence of God. In the book of Genesis, we read of Hagar who Sarah, the wife of Abraham, gives to him as a concubine.

[26 : 55] She is to act in her place. And the result of that is a bitter jealousy arising in the heart of Sarah against Hagar.

And Hagar is forced to flee into the desert. But an angel of the Lord confronts her and makes her return. But not without delivering a promise from the Lord concerning her son Yedan-born Ishmael.

And Hagar calls that place of encounter Beer-Lahai-Roi after the name of the Lord who she called Thou God Seest Me.

She understood through that encounter that this God not only knew that she had run away but he knew her grief not just her physical location.

Then again in the book of Joshua chapter 7 we read of the sin of Echan who coveted from the spoils of war a goodly Babylonian garment we are told plus gold and silver.

[28 : 09] despite this being an accursed thing which the people of God were forbidden to take. Nobody knew what Echan had done but the Lord and until the son and the sinner was exposed his pleasure was evident.

again we are reminded of the all-seeing eye of God being upon all. In the New Testament we have the account of the calling of Nathan by Jesus Nathaniel rather by Jesus.

Nathaniel asks him how he knows him and we read there before that Philip called thee when thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee and Nathaniel is so impressed by that description that's given to him by Christ that the confession comes from a rabbi that were the son of God that were the king of Israel and Jesus replies to that because I said unto thee I saw thee under the fig tree believest thou thou shalt see greater things than this.

The Lord Jesus Christ had omniscience had access to the ongoings that he could not possibly have known without being physically present which he was not.

Again we could perhaps refer to the conversion of Saul of Tarshish or the vision of Corlelius or the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira all of which required intimate passionate knowledge of the secrets of men's hearts but not a secret to God or the Lord Jesus.

[30 : 14] I now suggest to you some examples from the experience of people who came to find for themselves the truth of what this means at a personal level.

One of the writers reminds us that while God knows us intimately and exhaustively we cannot know him in the same way.

We can only know him as he chooses to reveal himself to us. And before we begin to make excuses he has made enough known about himself through his word and by means of his son Jesus Christ to ensure that we do know enough.

But part of our problem is that we forget or perhaps at times we choose not to remember as the psalmist here reminds us however we cannot hide from God.

It was recently reflecting on the original condition of Adam was created. He was created holy. He had no sin. He was a spiritual man who enjoyed fellowship with God in the garden where God had placed him.

[31 : 31] And yet when sin entered Adam's heart he went and tried to hide from God. Now I don't believe that Adam forgot all that he knew about God.

in an instant. So he would know the futility of trying to hide and yet that is what he does. That is the very thing that he went to do.

He went and hid himself or tried to hide himself from God in the garden. And just like Adam many still do the same.

Many of them should know better. And is it not the case with all our sins that they are committed under the all-seeing gaze of him with whom we have to do?

Are we atheists at that point? Or are we guilty of the sin of an unholy boldness? As Bishop Horne reminds us, we can never sin with security, but in a place where the eye of God cannot behold us.

[32 : 40] But where is that place? Heaven is the seat of his glory, creation the scene of his providence, the grave the theatre of his power. We hear a lot at this time of the plight of students because of Covid, and many of them have gone to university and college for the first time.

And if things haven't changed, many of them are flying the nest, thinking themselves to be free from the influence of whom, perhaps the influence of godly parents or the so-called straitjacket of our God-fearing community.

for all who succeed they will live to regret it. But for some, now and perhaps, perhaps never, most definitely in the past, they found that no matter how far they had gone from home that God followed them and made that known to them.

Derek Tidball speaks of some who went to the farthest corners of the world, someone to New Zealand, someone to Paraguay, someone to Israel, holy to meet with God there, a God they had hoped to leave behind.

I recently read the story of a young man who was desperate to leave home at the earliest opportunity. At the age of 16, perhaps younger than that, he joined the Navy.

[34 : 15] His mother did not want him to go, but he was determined. And his mother did two things. she resolved to pray for him, which she dutifully did, and she put a Bible in his case.

But like so many mothers before her, that Bible was left to gather dust.

Her intentions did not yield fruit, at once anyway. but the Bible, as we said, was placed carefully in the back of a drawer, and there it remained.

It's amazing how superstitious some people can be. It could have been easy to throw the Bible over the side of the ship, but that didn't happen. It was placed carefully, but in the furthest corner of the drawer.

I don't know how long for, but one day he had time on his hands, and that young man took the Bible from the drawer when it came to his attention.

[35 : 24] He did what many would do in the circumstances, he just opened the Bible and flicked the pages, and you know what? His eye fell on this psalm that's before us, and one verse caught his eye, the words of verse nine, if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the othermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand hold me.

And his eyes just fixed it on these words, if I take the wings of the morning. Not only was this young man at sea, at that moment, the name of the ship, and perhaps you won't believe this, the name of the ship was the wings of the morning, and the boy was transfixed by the words, which he read and re-read.

Needless to say, God spoke to him and reminded him with these words. He could not get away from God.

It also reminded him that God could keep him safe wherever he was. What happened after that, God knows. I haven't got the story imprinted in my memory, I don't know how it ended, but I do know that part, as it was told.

You can believe if he trusted in the God whose word it was that he experienced salvation, and you can be assured that God knows all things about every one of us, and it's because of what he knows that he is able to deal with us at the last, for all will give their account to him.

[37 : 26] When we look at the word of God, it reminds us not only of who God is, but of what we are, and that we are sinners in need of a saviour, and that there is a day coming when we will appear before God and answer for our lives spent in this world.

And if we can't in our account, answer to him, and include in our answer the knowledge that we have of Christ as our saviour, then, wo betide us.

The words of the psalmist reminds us that there is nothing that is in the book of life that is not writ large before the eye of him, before we have to appear.

And our prayer is that every one of us would be sensitive and conscious of his presence with us, for his people, our presence is a most certain, a most sure source of courage and encouragement to them, because he will never lead nor forsake his own.

But those who are fearful and who have not trusted in him are probably very much afraid of what awaits them because of what he knows about them.

[38 : 56] May God impress these words upon our heart and remind us that wherever we are and whoever we are is I, is upon us always. Let us pray.

We give thanks for your word that reminds us that there is no place that we can go from your spirit or that there is no place that we can flee from your presence.

May we help us to be mindful of these truths and that we can take them to heart, confident that for those who are in this world and who are fearful of what this world is bringing before us.

The psalmist says, elsewhere, God is our refuge and our strength and strength and strength at present aid. And that very word there, that when we are in the dire need, this help is there presently, instantly, and we pray that we would note that for ourselves.

Continue with us, we pray, blessing your word to all who would hear it. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you all now and always.

[40 : 23] Amen.