

"Search Me, O God, and Know My Heart" Psalm 139

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise that we can gather to give you worship as you draw us into yourself. We give you thanks and praise, Lord, for the sound of children amongst us, that it is truly a privilege to have these younger brothers and sisters with us as we worship you.

And Father, we just ask now that as you draw us into yourself, that you would take any distractions from this week, whether good or bad, and that you would help us to be focused on what you have to say to us through your word and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen. So we are continuing our series through the Book of Psalms. Every summer, Church of Messiah, Messiah West here, and then the church downtown, Church of Messiah, they always go through the Book of Psalms.

And we're nearing the end of the Book of Psalms. We've been doing this for a couple summers now. And the thing about this psalm is that when I first preached it, I got it completely wrong.

It was something, when I did some more reading about the psalm, it was very humbling to find out that I actually got the psalm wrong. But it's good to acknowledge it.

[1 : 15] It's good to acknowledge when you get things wrong. And you can just try again. Because God is good. God is gracious. When we get things wrong, nothing happens to him because he is sovereign.

And as we go into this psalm, this psalm 139, the psalmist David, he is reflecting on these great truths about God. In seminary, which is Bible college, a fancy name for Bible college, you have to, you take theology classes.

And the first thing you do in theology is that you have to, you go through the communicable attributes of God and the incommunicable attributes of God. And I know those are fancy words. What it means is that the communicable attributes of God are things that we share with God.

Though we are flawed in them, we share them with God. And these can be a desire for love, a desire for mercy, a desire for justice, and things like that. And then there's the incommunicable attributes of God, which are these attributes that only God has.

Only the God of the universe has. We can never possess them. And David, in this psalm, the psalm we're looking at today, Psalm 139, he is reflecting on three of them.

[2 : 32] What he's reflecting on is God's omniscience, which means God is all-knowing. He knows everything. He's reflecting on God's omnipresence, which means God is everywhere.

He's everywhere. No matter where you go, God is there. And then he's also reflecting on God's omnipotence, which means God is all-powerful. They're just fancy words for saying that.

God is all-knowing. God is all-present. God is all-powerful. And David is meditating on this as he writes Psalm 139.

And that is where we're going to look at. We're going to meditate on this psalm together and glean from it what David meditates from and what God has to say through it.

So please turn with me to Psalm 139. It would be very helpful if you have your Bibles with you because you can see what's coming next and what has been said before.

[3 : 32] It's very helpful to have your Bible. You can underline it. It's just helpful to have. If you have it on your phone, pull it out. It's very handy. And we're going to look at this psalm in three ways.

We're going to look at it in one way, that God is always present. Another way we're going to look at it, God's presence is a threat. And the last way we're going to look at it is God's presence shows his love.

Again, God's presence, God is always present. God's presence is a threat. And God's presence shows his love. So point one. And we're going to begin in verse one.

Oh Lord, you have searched me and known me. Now right away, right off the bat, David sets the theme of the psalm.

David is reflecting on how God has searched him and how God knows him. So this has already happened. And as he comes to this, as he writes it, he's reflecting on this great truth that God already knows him and God has already searched him.

[4 : 36] God has already searched his heart. It's something like this. In marriage, you'll be the closest to this person you'll ever be with anyone else.

And it's also said in marriage that you'll marry, when you marry, you actually end up marrying five different people. Because through lifetime with your spouse, we change.

We all change. We are different from the day when we say I do to the day that we die. We are different people. So in marriage, you are so close with this person. They see you at your best and they see you at your worst.

We could all reflect on these moments, those who are married here. But marriage is just a glimpse at how much God knows us. God knows us deeper than our spouse can ever know us.

Knows us deeper than our spouse could ever know us. And David works this idea out in the next verses. Verses two to three, he says this. You know when I sit down and when I rise up.

[5 : 42] You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. So David is talking about here is that God knows him on the inside.

In verse two, he says, you know when I sit down. You know when I rise up. You discern my thoughts from afar. See, David is reflecting on this great truth that God knows him.

Knows him on the inside. And then God also knows him on the outside. That every action he does, anything he does, God knows it and God sees it.

You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. This is a great truth to reflect on for us as we are in prayer. To reflect on this very humbling and sobering truth that God knows us inside and out.

In COVID, I know I'm bringing up COVID here. We try to forget about those COVID times. It's amazing it happened five years ago. In COVID, the government used our phones to monitor movement to see where the outbreaks were happening.

[6 : 54] It was something that needed to get done during that time. And they would see where people would congregate. They would see the movements of people. Again, that is just a glimpse at how much God knows what we do, what we think, and what we say.

Because he doubles down again on it in verse four. When he says this, Even before a word is on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.

See, David's reflecting on this idea that God knows all his thoughts. C.S. Lewis, in his famous book, *The Four Loves*, he reflects on four different loves.

And one of them is friendship. And as he reflects on this idea of friendship, he talks about this time when he has these friends of his. When they meet, they become united in one hobby or one interest that they have.

And they become such good friends that they are able to finish each other's sentences in a moment sometimes. You may have had a friend where that's been the case for you. That when you're hanging out and you're laughing and you're having a good time, that you can almost, in a sense, finish the sentence that they're about to finish.

[8 : 07] But that also is a glimpse of God and what he knows about our thoughts. Because the thing with God, and what David is reflecting on here, is that he knows our past, our present, and future thoughts.

God's omniscience surrounds us. His all-knowingness surrounds us. And then David continues as he reflects on this great truth.

When he says this, Where shall I go from your spirit, in verse 7? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there.

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night, even the darkness is not dark to you. The night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

[9 : 16] David is reflecting on how God is everywhere. Sheol is the place of the dead. And when he says sea, when he's reflecting on the sea, like the greatness of the sea, that there's no escape from God, what that is, is that David is in Jerusalem writing this, and that he's reflecting on the Mediterranean Sea.

So the distance between Jerusalem and the sea is so vast for him that he's reflecting on this moment that God is everywhere. There's no place he can go.

Can't go to heaven, can't go down into the place of the dead. God will be there. Wherever he goes, God is there. There's no escaping God.

God's omnipresence, God's all everywhere presence surrounds us. And lastly, in this first section, David reflects on another great truth, God's omnipotence, all-powerful.

And he shows us this in these verses, 13 to 18. I'm trying to rip through the verses so we can reflect on it and go into the application after. He says this, For you formed my inward parts.

[10 : 25] You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works. My soul knows it very well.

My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret. Intricately woven in the depths of the earth, 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. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand.

I awake, and I am still with you. David's reflecting on another truth, that from conception to death, our days are ordained by God.

God is in control of our lives. From conception to death, God is in control. And because of that, because God is the creator of the world, God is the creator of life, those, the ending of life, not from natural means, goes against God's plan for, for his great work.

[11 : 41] So, with God, abortion is wrong. With God, euthanasia is wrong. And I'm not here to point a finger. I acknowledge that we are in a room of many people. Some of you may have done this, or have no son who's done this.

God has not written you off. And we're not here to write you off either. Because this is something that we wrestle with, with God. That God is the creator of life.

And God does not write us off when we do things like that. God does not write us off. His love is steadfast for those who put their faith and trust in Christ. Keller, Timothy Keller, a famous pastor who's recently passed away, when he's commenting on this section, he says this.

He says, this isn't a political thing that David is writing. This is before the culture wars. It's just how it is with God. God's the creator of life.

He is not the, this isn't political. God is all-powerful. He's the creator of life. His omnipotence surrounds us. See, this is the section, as I said at the beginning, that when I first preached, when I first preached on this text, I got the psalm wrong.

[12 : 51] Because the reason why I got this psalm wrong is that if you only read it in the English language, if you don't go to the Hebrew text, you miss the whole point of the psalm.

So when you read it in English, it looks like David is praying to God. He's praying the whole time. He's celebrating God. But in the Hebrew, something else is actually happening here.

Because this is written in the Hebrew language. As David meditates on the psalm, as he meditates on these great three truths, he actually goes on a spiritual journey.

You see him struggling with this concept that God is everywhere, that God knows his thoughts, every thought, that God is the creator of life, the creator of the world.

You see him struggling with it. So this brings us into the second point, that God's presence is a threat. If you look again at the first stanza, verses 1 to 6, if you go into verse 6, at the end of the stanza, David says this, such knowledge is too wonderful for me.

[14 : 01] It is high and I cannot attain it. Now in the, if you read this in English, this seems like he's just celebrating God for this great truth, that God knows his thoughts, knows what he's doing, how he's rising up and is going to bed, just knows it all.

But that's not the case because verse 5 gives it away about what's happening. David says this, you hem me in behind and before and lay your hand upon me.

See what David is writing here is that he's actually suffocating on this great truth that God knows all his thoughts, God knows all his movements. He's being suffocated by this knowledge.

He's feeling claustrophobic. There was a time when I used to be really into ice climbing and I would go to Alberta to do a lot of ice climbing in the mountains.

And the thing with ice climbing in the mountains is that you actually do a lot of the ice climbing. You climb waterfalls and it's in avalanche chutes. So sort of the avalanches come off the mountains and you climb the ice that's in these chutes because it's the best ice that you can find.

[15 : 07] And the thing about avalanches, normally you check the conditions and it's fine, but the thing with avalanches, if you get stuck in an avalanche, you become, the snow traps you in and you end up suffocating.

That's what is kind of happening here is that David is being avalanched with this idea that God knows everything about him, knows the thought that he just did, knows the action that he just did.

It's all consuming him. He's stuck in this thought. So when he says in verse 6, such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high.

I cannot attain it. He's actually saying in a way that he's almost recoiling at it, that he's terrified of this great truth, that he feels threatened for it.

And that's how we slide into verse 7, the second stanza, when he says this, where shall I go from your spirit or where shall I flee from your presence? Because this knowledge that he has of God's knowing everything about him, that God is everywhere, makes him want to run from God, makes him want to flee from God.

[16 : 18] That's how this psalm is. That's how David sets up the psalm, that he actually wants to run from this great truth about God. It brings us to verse 7, that God, that he wants to flee from God.

That the idea that God knows everything and makes him want to flee. Rebellion, running away from God, for this knowledge is too great. It's that sense of when, I don't know if you've ever been so angry at somebody that you need to just leave the room because you just had to get away.

It's that idea that this knowledge just makes you want to flee the room because it's too grand. God knows everything about you. This idea that God is all-knowing, always present, all-powerful, is threatening to us as well.

It's not just threatening to David. It's threatening to us as well. Because we are told from birth that we are the decision makers of our lives. That we are the entire beings of our lives.

That we are at the center. It's about me. But this psalm, this psalm, shows us that we are not at the center of our lives. God is at the center of our lives.

[17 : 33] God is in control of everything about us. He knows everything about us. But our hearts don't want this to be true. We want to flee from this thought. Because then we can't do the things we want to do.

But our hearts have been like this since the fall of man. And you read about that in Genesis 3. But at the same time, we want this to be true.

We want God to be the center of our lives. Because we want justice. We want mercy. We want love. And we want peace. And those, the likes of those. But we can't have that without God being the center of the world.

As soon as we put ourselves into the center, you can't have that anymore. Because everyone has a different definition of what love is, what justice is, and what mercy is.

But with God at the center, he has the one moral standard, the one standard of what all these things are. Without God at the center, you can't have it.

[18 : 33] With God at the center, you can have it. And David, in Psalm 139, realizes this halfway through. As he goes on his spiritual journey through it, he realizes it in verses 10 to 12, where he says this, even there, as he's talking about in Sheol, in death, in the sea, even there, your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, the light about me be night, even the darkness is not dark to you. The night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

See, only when we take ourselves off our pedestals, that we can joyfully say, as David does here in the text, that you, your hand, shall lead me, your right hand, shall hold me.

See, as David has a heart change within this psalm, he keeps meditating on it, but his tone, his tone, as he writes, is so different. As he says in verses 17 to 18, as he's reflecting on God's word, God's thoughts, that they are precious to him.

They're gems. They're priceless. And when it says in verse 18, when he says, I awake, and I am still with you, what he's talking about here is actually not sleep.

[19 : 57] What he's talking about here is a death. But how can David write about this? How can he write that, as I die, I awake, and you are still with me? See, David is promised that the Messiah would come through his offspring, that he would have a resurrected body at some point.

And if you look at the next verses, you see how this wraps up in the next verses of the psalm. It all wraps up. So David, as he writes, is reflecting on this great truth, that he knows there will come a point that the Messiah will come, and that when he dies, there will come a time that he'll awake again, and he, God, will be with him.

So in the next part, in verses 19 to 22, David writes this, Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God, O men of blood, depart from me. They speak against you with malicious intent, and your enemies take your name in vain.

Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred. I count them as my enemies. You might be thinking, well, doesn't this go against the New Testament teaching of Jesus?

Doesn't, isn't this very anti-Jesus? Well, the thing is, Jesus hasn't come yet as he wrote this. So what has happened between the time of David and the time of us now?

[21 : 23] is that Jesus came into the world. God's son came into the world. And Jesus commands his followers to love their enemies. You might also be thinking, you might be here and thinking, well, this Jesus guy, why do I need him?

Why do I need Jesus in my life? Why do I need to do this? You see, sin entered the world and pushed us from God. Verses 19 to 22 are actually aimed at us, at those who don't know Christ.

But Jesus takes this judgment. He takes this judgment that we see in 19 to 22 and he puts it on himself. For those who have their faith and trust in Christ and follow him will not face this judgment.

The thing that is so rich about this psalm is that it shows us every human emotion. Sorry, the book of Psalms shows us every human emotion. It's such a rich book. It's such a book, a good book that we should constantly read from the Bible.

We should read a psalm every day. Maybe 119, you split it up. But we should read the psalm every day. Martin Luther, who's a famous reformer from back in the day, he said that the book of Psalms is a mini Bible because you see Christ all through it.

[22 : 40] You see every human emotion and you see Christ dealing with the human emotion. See, Jesus, Jesus went to the cross for you and me. He took on the punishment that we deserved.

But the thing that's so profound about Jesus on the cross is that when he was on there, he prays Psalm 22, which opens with, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

See, that psalm is all about God being far away. But this psalm that we have here is all about God being very present. Why didn't he pray that psalm?

Why didn't Jesus pray that psalm on the cross? See, Jesus took the judgment of verses 19 to 22 from us and we are given the last part of it, that we can come to God, that we are not alone.

Jesus became alone, separated from God, so that we can come to God through him, through his death and resurrection on the cross. The psalm ends with a prayer that we should all pray every day.

- [23 : 46] This beautiful prayer in verses 23 to 24. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way of everlasting.

See, David opens the psalm with the past tense that God has already searched him and known him and it makes him recoil at it. But now you see after the change of heart at the end, he asks God to continually search him, to continually know him, to continually know his heart and to make it known to him so he can deal with it and that he asks God to lead him to the way of everlasting, to the way of salvation and that is a prayer we should do every day is that we should ask God to look at our hearts, show us our hearts, lay it bare for us and if you're here and you feel like God has left you, you feel like you're going through a season that God is not in your life or you feel like God has abandoned you.

In verses 11 and 12, David writes about that God is with him in the dark. Surely the darkness shall cover me and the light about me be night.

Even the darkness is not dark to you. The night is bright as the day for darkness is as light with you. In John 1, chapter 1, it says that Jesus is the light of the world.

Jesus is the light of the world and if you feel like you're going through a moment of darkness, you feel like you're going through a desert season, Jesus is the light of the world. He is the bread of life.

- [25 : 21] He is the one who has, he is the one that will guide you. He is with you. Even though you may feel like your season is complete darkness, Jesus is with you because he's the light of the world.

He will guide you. Just ask him to guide you. So as we wrap up, this psalm is a great truth of God's great power, God's great omniscience, God's great omnipresence and God's great omnipotence.

As we reflect on that, we can ask God to take control of our lives because he is the all-powerful God that we can never, we can never control our lives on our own.

So as we go and we continue on in the service, let's reflect on that. Let's praise God that he is in control of our lives and that he sent his son to die for you and me so we can have eternal life, eternal salvation.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your son, Jesus, for his work on the cross. We give you thanks and praise, God, that you are in control of everything, that you have searched our hearts, you have searched our minds and our thoughts and you still love us.

- [26 : 35] You still gave us Christ. So Lord, please strengthen us, please continually search us and lay our hearts bare to us so that we can follow you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.