

Knowing the All-Knowing God

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, church. It's good to be with you on this Sunday after Christmas Day. Our sermon text is Psalm 139. Psalm 139. Let me pray for us. Let me pray for us.

And then we'll consider this psalm together. Amen. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for bringing us through another year and for being so faithful to us.

God, we ask now that on this last Sunday of the year, as we turn to your word, you would grant us by your Holy Spirit the illumination that we need to understand your word properly and to receive it, not just in our heads, but in our hearts.

So that we might be changed to know you, to love you, and to go into this world as salt and light. God, we need you. Without you, we are nothing.

But we thank you that you know us and you love us and you meet us in your word. So we pray that you would do that now for your namesake. Amen. Psalm 139. Let me go ahead and read this for us.

[1 : 1 6] To the choir master, a psalm of David. Oh, Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up.

You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, oh, Lord, you know it all together.

You hem me in behind and before and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high. I cannot attain it.

Where shall I go from your spirit 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.

[2 : 2 2] For you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am 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 could count them, they are more than the sand.

I wake, and I am still with you. Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! They speak against you with malicious intent, 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 my enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

[3 : 27] Try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any grievous way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting. Well, this end of the year, we've been walking through the Psalms, and we've been doing sort of the Psalms' greatest hits.

And Psalm 139 is rightfully one of the most well-known and well-loved of the Psalms. But the main theme of Psalm 139 is one that at first can seem a bit abstract.

Because Psalm 139 is about God's omniscience. That is, God knows everything. He is the all-knowing God.

You can sort of scan down through this Psalm if you have it in front of you. And just look at how often this Psalm says, God knows, God searches, God sees, God knows, God's there, He knows. He knows everything.

And too often when we think about God's attributes, especially one like God's omniscience, it can feel a bit stuffy and academic and even a bit impractical.

[4 : 34] I mean, God's omniscience sounds like something that might be fun to debate late at night with friends around a cup of coffee. You know, how many angels really do fit on the head of that needle. But in the nitty-gritty of real life, does it make a difference?

But in verses 19 through 22 of this Psalm, we see that the psalmist, David, is very much in the nitty-gritty of real life. These verses near the end are a bit shocking when you read them at first, aren't they?

David, it seems, is surrounded by enemies, by people who hate him and hate God, by people who are out for blood. That is very nitty and very gritty. And what does David do?

He prays about and he meditates on, of all things, God's omniscience. This psalm shows us that God's all-knowingness, his omniscience, is intensely personal and intensely practical.

Because if God knows all things, then that means he knows all things about me and about you. Not just in general, but in particular, all the way down.

[5 : 53] We are fully known. And Psalm 139 shows us four very practical applications of knowing the God who knows everything. Not just generally, but personally about you.

And these four very practical applications are humility, comfort, praise, and cleansing. Knowing the God who knows everything about you means humility, comfort, praise, and cleansing.

So let's take a look. In verses 1 through 6, we see that because God knows everything about you, you must be humble. Let's read these lines again.

And notice how David says in so many words, Such knowledge, he says, is too wonderful for me.

It's high. I cannot attain it. It's too wonderful for me. It's high. I cannot attain it. Now, we don't often admit that these days, do we?

[7 : 20] We've spent the last 300 years or so as humans figuring that we can figure out pretty much anything with our reason or intellect. But isn't it the case that while science and reason and all these sorts of things have allowed us to discover wonderful things about the universe, aren't there still countless mysteries?

And in particular, isn't it the case that the human heart still remains very much a mystery? God doesn't just know where we've been when I sit down and when I rise up.

But God knows our very thoughts, the innermost thing about us. Even before a word is on my tongue, oh Lord, you know it. Altogether. God knows everything.

He doesn't just know what you do. He knows why you do it. And that brings humility. It's too wonderful for me. It's high.

I can't attain it. Just when we thought we might have it all figured out, we encounter the one who really does have it all figured out. And so when we are tempted to pride, when we are tempted to elevate ourselves on the basis of what we know, what we think we have figured out, it is very good for us to remember our knowledge is just a fraction of what God knows.

[8 : 45] What we know is just a little spark before the all-consuming fire of the all-knowing God. And of course, this doesn't mean that we can't know things truly.

David isn't doubting whether or not he can actually have some true understanding of the world or himself. But it's sort of like looking at a map. You know, when I look at a map of my street on my phone, I know most of the streets.

You know, I recognize most of the houses. But then what do we do? We sort of, you kind of swipe your fingers together like that, right? And what happens? Zooms out a little bit. I swipe my fingers together. It zooms out.

And then you do it some more and some more and some more. And the map suddenly is not just showing my street, but my neighborhood. And then our city. And then our continent.

And then you do it again and you can see like the whole world, right? Sitting there on your phone. But what if you could keep swiping further out? Solar system upon solar system.

[9 : 49] Galaxy upon galaxy. Galaxy. If we had a map like that, it would be dizzying. But realize with God, you can't just, you know, you can swipe not just out and out and out, but in and in and in.

Down and down and down. Not just to the neighborhood. Not just to the street. But to the house. And to the person. And God's map goes down into our words.

And his map goes down into our thoughts. And down into our motives. And all the way down to our deep desires and dreams. All the way down. Nothing is hidden. We are fully known.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. We are humbled before the all-knowing God. So as we deal with others.

As we deal with ourselves. Remember there's only one who knows everything. It's God. And therefore we must be humble. But not just humble.

[10 : 55] The psalm goes on in verses 7 through 10. And says, because God knows everything about you. You must be comforted. In these verses, notice.

Notice how the knowledge of God follows us wherever we go. Let me read them again. Where shall I go from your spirit? Where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to the heaven? You're there. If I make my bed in Sheol?

That is all the way down in the earth. Down in the grave. You're there. If I take the wings of the morning? That is if I go to the far east. The place of the sunrise. Or if I dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea.

The far west. Even there. Your hand, David says, shall lead me. And your right hand shall hold me. Is there anywhere that we can escape?

Or flee this all-knowing God? No. God is everywhere. Heaven and earth. East and west. And by implication, every place in between.

[11 : 53] The all-knowing God is already there. And that means comfort. Even there. Your hand shall lead me.

And your right hand shall hold me. But now, friends, think with me for a moment. God knows everything about you.

Everything. And you can't escape him. Imagine for a second that this whole sanctuary was covered with projection screens.

Not just these up here. But the whole room was just covered with projection screens. And the entirety of your life started just playing on all these screens. Every triumph. Every success.

But also every failure. And not just your public actions. But your private thoughts too. All of it was made fully known. On display.

[12 : 51] Right here. Now, I don't know about you. But if that were true of me. Or you. Most of us would want to do what?

We'd want to flee. We'd head straight for the door. And yet, when it comes to God. David says. There's no escape.

You can go to the lobby. God still knows. You can go to the parking garage. God still knows. You can go home. God still knows. He sees it all.

And you can't get away. But how on earth. Is that thought. Comforting. Well.

Because David knows. That as he says. The hands. That catch him. The hands. That lead him. Are hands that love him.

[13 : 54] How did David know. That in being fully. Known by God. He would also be fully. Loved by God. How did he know. That those hands. Those almighty.

All knowing. All present hands. Wouldn't see his whole life. How did he know. That those hands. Wouldn't reject him. Or drop him. Or leave him. Well.

Because in the Old Testament. God gave the people. A sacrifice. And he said. Take this animal. And put your hand. On its head. And all your sins.

And all your failures. God said. I'm going to reckon. To that animal. In your place. And when that animal. Is sacrificed. It will be as if. All your failures. And all your sins.

Go with it. And then I'll see you. And then I'll love you. As if you had no sin at all. But long after David.

[14 : 52] Friends. There was another sacrifice. And this time. It wasn't a sheep. Or a bull. It wasn't a sign. It wasn't a symbol. The sacrifice to come.

Was God's own self. Taking human form. You see. In the Old Testament. The sinner. Put his hands. Or her hands. On the lamb.

But in the New Testament. The lamb. Puts his hands. On the sinner. Jesus saw us. Jesus knew us fully. And he loved us.

And then he took away our sins. And his perfect sacrifice. On the cross. So now. For all who trust in him. God sees them. As if they had no sin at all.

The hands of God. Have been pierced. For you. Believer. The one who knows you fully. Loves you completely. And you cannot escape him.

[15 : 53] Those pierced hands. Hold you. And lead you. Whether are you. Whether you are in the highest. Of heights. Or the lowest. Of depths. Whether your life is rising.

With the dawn. Or whether your life is setting. Over the sea. For you. Now like Jonah. You might try. To run in the opposite direction.

Maybe this morning. You've been trying to get away from God. But don't you see. Even where you are. Right now. Seemingly so far away from God.

In rebellion. Or anger. Or doubt. God is right there. Ready for you. To fall again into his hands.

The hands that love you. So turn to him. He's closer to you. Than you are to yourself. He knows. You might feel like your life.

[16 : 55] Has taken all the wrong turns. You've tried your best. But life still keeps. Dealing you the worst. Maybe it's marriage problems. Maybe it's work problems. Maybe it's kids problems.

And you take a look at your life. And this is not where you want to be. And yet. God knows. His hands are right there.

Still holding you. Still leading you. You are not forgotten. You are loved. You are known. God knows everything about you.

And we must therefore. Be comforted. And here. Perhaps it's no surprise.

That the psalm. That the psalm. Then turns. From humility. To comfort. To praise. In verses 11 through 18. This is really the climax of the psalm.

[17 : 55] Because God knows. Everything about you. You must praise him. Let's read these. Rightfully famous. And familiar verses again.

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. The night. As bright as the day. For darkness is as light with you.

For you formed me in my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you. There it is. 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 there was yet none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts. Oh God.

[18 : 53] How vast is the sum of them. Again this is language of praise. If I could count them. They are more than the sand. I'll wake. And I'm still with you.

These verses take us from the earliest moments of our life. Just an embryo in our mother's womb. They take us from the earliest moments of our earthly life.

To the vast dawn of eternal life. I awake. Verse 18 says. And many commentators see that as a reference. To awaking in eternal life.

In the resurrection. And so from conception to resurrection. The psalm says we are gods. He made us fearfully and wonderfully.

And he decreed the events of our whole life. He wrote them in his book. Everyone. Even before we left the womb. And so.

[19 : 57] Even in the darkness. As verses 11 and 12 point out. Even in the darkness. We can praise him.

After all. In our mother's wombs. When we were helpless. And formless. And our days hadn't even begun. God knew us. And loved us. And we were his.

And so if we reach a similarly dark time in this life. When we feel helpless. And formless. And like our days aren't even beginning. We need not despair.

We can still praise him. We are still fearfully and wonderfully made. God still has a plan for us. As certain as the words written in this book.

And God still has a future for us in Christ. We will awake one day. Brothers and sisters. We will awake one day. Not to the same old, same old.

[20 : 57] But to life eternal. How precious indeed. Are God's thoughts. God's thoughts. God's thoughts. God's thoughts.

God's thoughts. And you know, if this is true. If from conception to resurrection, we belong to God. Then that has implications for how we treat one another.

Every human being is made in God's image. And has incomparable worth and dignity.

And that means we must respect out of praise to our creator. The dignity of every human life. And that life begins according to Psalm 139.

Even in the womb. When we were just unformed substance. As verse 16 says. And this is why. As Christians.

[21 : 55] We must care deeply. About caring for the life of the unborn. In other words. To end a life in the womb.

Is to end a fully human life. That belongs not to us. But to God. And that's why Christians from the earliest days.

Have always considered abortion and infanticide as wrong. Now of course. I know this is a controversial topic. But Psalm 139 is one of the clearest passages in the whole Bible.

That speaks to this issue. So we really can't avoid it this morning. But I also know. That this is an issue. That hits close to home. For many of us.

And so the church needs to be the first to say. That no matter what choices we've made in the past. The mercy of God in Christ.

[22 : 53] Covers all shame. And all failings. And all sins. And as we advocate for. And seek to protect the life of unborn humans.

We must do more. Than merely condemn abortion. You know. Just as the church has historically said. That is wrong. The church has historically also cared. For pregnant mothers in distress.

And adopted children who were in need. And sought economic equality. And opportunity for the poor and oppressed. And so today. We must care for life inside the womb.

And do what's in our power. To stop the ending of human life there. And we must equally care for life outside the womb. And we must do what's in our power. To stop the ending and diminishing of human life.

There as well. Because if all of life. If all of human life. From conception on through the resurrection. Belongs to God. Then all human life. Is worthy of dignity and honor.

[23 : 51] And sacrificial love. All of it. And just imagine friends. God knows us all.

God knows us all. God knows us all. God knows us all. When you encounter another human being. No matter who they are. Or what they believe. You are encountering someone.

Who belongs to God. Someone whom God knows fully. The last I checked. The world's population is around 7.8 billion people.

And God knows everything. About each and every one of them. From the moment of conception. To this very day. And on into eternity.

How vast indeed. Are the sum of God's thoughts. How much more are they. Than even the grains of sand. How precious.

[24 : 50] That he knows. Not just everything in the abstract. But everything personally. Intimately. About each and every one of us. When we look at another human then.

We must see there. The infinite. Loving. Knowledge of God. And in looking at the face. Of another human being.

And considering how vast. And how precious. Is the knowledge and love of God. We must praise him. But lastly.

Knowing the all-knowing God. Doesn't just mean humility. And comfort and praise. The psalm ends in verses 19 through 24. By saying. Because God knows everything about you.

You must seek. Inner. Cleansing. You must seek. Inner cleansing. Now we saw earlier. How in verses 19 through 22.

[25 : 49] David speaks of his enemies. But in reality. David isn't talking about his enemies. Per se here. He's talking about God's enemies. Verse 20 says. That there are those who speak against God.

With malicious intent. And they take God's name in vain. That is. They treat God with utter contempt. And David in essence says here. I don't want anything to do. With people like that God.

You'd be fully within your rights. To judge them. And if you're against them. Then I'm against them. I'm staying away. Now. What provokes David.

To bring up. God's enemies. At this point in the psalm. I mean come on. Here we are. Having a nice poetic meditation. On God's omniscience. And suddenly.

Now we're talking about loathing those. Who rise up against God. What is that all about? Couldn't the psalm just sort of ended. With like how precious are your thoughts. We could have called it a day. And gone home. But perhaps.

[26 : 50] Perhaps. David's very meditation. On the wonder. Of God's all knowing glory. God's intimate knowledge and care. For every single human being.

Perhaps that's the very thing. That made David realize. Just how bad it is. To mock. And reject God. As David caught.

A fresh glimpse. Of the godness. Of God. That gave him a fresh realization. Of the sinfulness of sin. Isn't it true.

That when you see the beauty. And preciousness of something. You start to care a lot more. About the things that would damage. Or distort it. When I go to the aquarium. In mystic.

Which my family loves going there. When I go to the mystic aquarium. And I see how beautiful. And how diverse. And how huge. And how incredible. Ocean life is. I suddenly for a little bit.

[27 : 47] Start to care a lot more. About conservation. And ending pollution. And saving the oceans. You know. You go home. And you're like. Where are those little plastic things. That hold the six packs together. Let's cut those up. We got to save the seals.

Right. You care a lot more. Because you've just seen. How beautiful it is. It's the same with God. When we're struck. By his beauty. And love.

When we're struck. By the beauty. And love. That he knows me. And that he loves me. We suddenly realize. What a terrible thing it is. To reject.

And to ridicule God. And so David becomes more aware. Of the sinfulness of sin. And he wants nothing to do with it. But notice.

And this is key. Notice that he doesn't just apply this. To the outside. The psalm ends. In its climax. By applying it to the inside.

[28 : 47] Let me read again. Verses 23 and 24. Search me oh 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 everlasting. You see. David knows. That the sinfulness of sin. Isn't far away. From his own heart. The fool says in his heart.

There is no God. And so often. I am the fool. I might talk a good game. About loathing those. Who rise up against God. But too often.

It's my own fist. Shaking at the heavens. And so the psalm ends. By applying. The omniscience of God. To our hearts.

Our hearts. That are in desperate need. Of inner cleansing. Of growth. And holiness. And godliness. If God knows everything. Then he knows.

[29 : 42] The grievous ways in me. That is those aspects of character. That lead to grief. And he can show them to me. And he can lead me instead. In the way everlasting.

Brothers and sisters in Christ. Is this a regular part. Of your prayer life? Do you ask the Holy Spirit. To come.

And search you. And to show you your heart. To show you what you can't. See for yourself. So that you might turn away. From grievous ways.

And be led by the Spirit. In the way everlasting. In the way of Christ. You know sometimes. When we pray like that. The Spirit reveals. A particular. Sinful action.

Something that. We just didn't see before. Some action that we're taking. That's against God's will. And he invites us. To turn away. From those harmful actions. And develop a new set of habits. And a new set of actions.

[30 : 42] Sometimes what the Spirit reveals. Are sinful thoughts. And he invites us. To turn away. From those sinful thoughts. And to think on things. That are true. And lovely. And pure. And sometimes.

What the Spirit reveals. Is something even deeper. At the heart level. Deep down. In our motivations. He reveals. Deep down in there. That residual fear.

Or anger. Or doubt. That can so often drive us. And the Spirit says. Hear again. The voice of your all-knowing God.

Who says. Don't fear. Be at peace. Trust me. This week.

In one of your times of prayer. Would you consider. Making these verses your own. Consider that God knows. Everything about you. And let that lead you to humility.

[31 : 41] And to comfort. And to praise. And then with the words. Of verses 23 through 24. Invite God. To search you. To know your heart.

And then listen. Talk with him. About what he shows you. Ask him to lead you anew. In the way everlasting.

We don't become. More Christ-like. On our own. We become more Christ-like. Through the work of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit. Does his work through prayer. And we learn how to pray.

From Psalms like this one. Imagine what it would be like. Imagine what it would be like. If we. As a church.

Had. This robust. Personal sense. Of God's omniscience. Do you think we'd be stuffy. And impractical.

[32 : 40] And overly academic. Not at all. Imagine. A church full of humility. A church full of comfort.

A church full of praise. Even in dark times. A church of ongoing. Inner cleansing. And change. Friends. This is good news. That Psalm 39. Holds out for us.

God fully. Knows us. And because of Jesus. And the reality of the incarnation. God fully knows us. From the inside. From conception. To resurrection.

Jesus lived. A fully. Human. Life. For you. How much more deeper. Our humility. How much more certain.

Our comfort. How much more exalted. Our praise. How much greater. Our hope. For change. God has come. Emmanuel. God with us.

[33 : 38] God knows us fully. And he will know us fully forever. Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Oh Lord Jesus. We pray that in this moment. You would search us. And you would know us. God as we sit before you in quiet.

Even now. God. Would you be revealing to us. Any grievous way. God help us to be humble before you.

And to turn away from those things. God help us to be comforted before you. And to be led by your spirit in the everlasting way. And Lord Jesus would our whole life.

Be a life of praise to you. We pray this in your name. Amen.