

God's precious thoughts to you

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 September 2024

Preacher: Mike Fitton

[0 : 00] Now you know the heating's on, maybe next week you'll be in t-shirts, Hawaiian t-shirts, shorts and flip-flops. It was quite a surprise when I walked in this morning with a sort of a really cuddly coat on.

And I was just thinking, wow, this is great, but it's warm. Okay, if we can have the first slide whenever you're ready, that would be great, thank you. I've had a very unusual last five days.

Yes, many of you'll know that Sandy and I and Shelley were all part of the Christian Motorcyclists Association. And it's a full-time ministry for me, and I've been up and down the country. Meeting one guy, a great friend of ours, who's dying of pancreatic cancer.

Attending the funeral of one of our members, a really wonderful man, 80 years old, who's gone to be with the Lord. And he'd had a brain tumor. And then going to another funeral, this is all in three days.

Of a great guy who I had the privilege of sharing the gospel with. A biker from the rougher side of the world of biking. He came to faith two years ago. And it was just an incredible celebration of his life as well.

[1 : 12] Some people said that must have been a really heavy burden. And it was to see the sadness of the family, and particularly regarding Colin, who's still praying for healing, but knows if God doesn't heal, he's so excited about heaven.

There's such an incredible mystery, isn't there, in those circumstances? That God speaks in, and he's so prevalent and real there in those circumstances, that he changes what can appear to be a horrendous situation into a place of celebration.

And I'm sure that many of us at some point had tears of sorrow mixed with tears of joy, and there was no difference between them. But I'm going to share today, as we carry on with our series, this is God's precious thoughts toward us, and his knowledge of us, no matter what circumstance we're facing.

And I've taken this from Psalm 139. Now, Psalm 139 is quite long, so I'm not going to read it all. I would really encourage you, although I'll refer to most of it, I would really encourage you to go home and find a quiet place today to just reflect on what the whole of the psalm says in relation to what God is saying to you.

And I always love the fact that when the Holy Spirit speaks to us, it can be so different one-to-one. And when Sandy and I often, as we're driving home, will say, what did God say to you today?

[2 : 40] And it can be two completely different thoughts, relevant to us individually, but also often to us as a couple. So it's wonderful to share that together. Okay.

So David wrote the psalm, and he said this. You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise, you perceive my thoughts from afar.

You discern my going out and my lying down. You're familiar with all my ways. Before a word is even on my tongue, Lord, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is just too wonderful for me. Too lofty for me to attain. In other words, my brain can't figure that out. Don't try.

That's God. Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you're there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

[3 : 40] And if I rise on the wings of the dawn, If I settle on the far side of the sea, Even there, your hand will guide me. Your right hand will hold me fast.

Next slide, please. I love words. I'm not an academic. Please don't think that at all. But I love the fact that when I got saved many years ago, I heard these omni words relating to God.

And one is omniscience, omnipotence, I nearly got that wrong, omnipresence, And one I'd never heard of before, Omnibenevolence.

Anybody know, I'm not asking John this question, Anybody know what omniscience means? I've got it written down so I know, But I just, Go on, John, what does that mean?

All-knowing. Which is the main focus of today. But omnipotence, what is that? Pardon?

[4 : 43] Yep, say it up so everybody can hear. Oh, powerful. Omnipresent is obvious. Alan, you'll know that one. God is everywhere. Even up in the balcony on the scaffolding When you're working up there, yeah.

And then omnibenevolence. That seems pretty easy, doesn't it? All-loving. So God is all-knowing, all-powerful. God is everywhere and God is all-knowing.

I mean, that is such a box, isn't it? A wonderful box for us to even get our heads round. It's just wonderful. Omni means in all ways, without limit. So God is all-knowing, without limit.

God is all-powerful, without limit. God is everywhere, without limit. And God is all-knowing. And I love the fact that we have friends, as many of you will, all over the world.

We had a friend, Rosie, who's come to church quite often. And we meet up with her on the morning, with Shelley for Bible study. And on Facebook or whatever it is.

[5 : 45] WhatsApp, FaceTime. We see each other in a video anyway. And she's headed off to America yesterday morning. For a month. But as we sort of logged in onto the little group we have at 6 a.m., so did she.

And even though the time dates, or times in America and here, are so different, she was about to go to bed. We'd just woken up. We were late this time, actually. We didn't log in until 10 past 6. I've never done that before.

But it was great. But where God's concerned, time factors, distance, etc., have absolutely no bearing.

Because for every single person right now, wherever they are in the world, that has put their trust in God, or is crying out to God, he hears. And he knows all about the circumstances.

He's sufficiently all-powerful, without any restriction, to deal with that, to carry us through it. And he's every single place, everywhere. Not in just nice, centrally heated churches, but in the darkest, horrible places as somebody cries out.

[6 : 55] But he is all loving as well, without restriction. And you know what? In the bike world, we share the gospel, and we meet so many people who think that God would never love them because they're so bad.

It's funny, isn't it? People who live in a sort of a middle-class, nice estate and home and everything, very rarely ever say that. But those who live on the edge of society, and that's why I love to go there, we love to go there, to share the gospel with them.

They're kind of more aware of their mess, and they want God, sometimes, to do that. You know, when we were in the funeral yesterday, I was praying for five guys in front of me.

They were so out of place. I felt so sorry for them, because I felt that before, once in church, before I got saved. They were so out of place in that sense. But the word spoke right into their lives.

So Psalm 139 is arguably the most radical statement in the Old Testament of God's personal relationship to an individual, King David. This is his way of saying, God, I realize this is what you are doing in my life.

[8 : 13] And it's equally relevant to you and I today. So please don't think, because we're referring to Scripture in the Old Testament, that yes, that's almost like a history lesson. It's not. Because God is the same today, yesterday, and forever.

So relevant is his word, and never will that change. So omniscience, God knows you. The psalm begins and ends with courageous words.

Have you ever said, God, search me. Search my heart. Search my motives, as Sandy mentioned earlier.

Incidentally, that wasn't me saying to Sandy, search your motives, or what are your motives. It was as I was traveling home, I was listening to a sermon. I actually listened to sermons and worship on my bike.

So if ever you come up behind me, and I'm going, I'm actually probably praising God. I'm doing it normally with two hands on the bike. But anyway. But as I was coming home, I was listening to a sermon, and this great preacher, whose name is gone, but anyway, God knows him.

[9 : 20] He said when he went to Bible college, many, many years ago, he was set for a four-year period to study with a view to becoming a pastor and a Bible teacher, and his sister gave him something that he kept on his desk every day of the time he was in study throughout his Bible college period.

And it simply said, what is your motive? What is your motive for being here? What is your motive for being engaged in ministry? And what are your hopes?

But what are your motive of your hopes? Because we've got to ensure that everything we're doing is transparent to God, and that what we feel called to, that we do with all our hearts as best we can, if you see what I mean.

But David says at the beginning of this psalm, you have searched me, Lord, and you know me. They're such courageous words. Then after the whole psalm, he feels a need at the end, I'm glad to say, to say, search me in effect again, and know my heart.

But this time, in effect, test me, take me to task over my motives, my thoughts, everything that comes and goes out of this brain of mine, and know my anxious thoughts.

[10 : 38] He isn't resistant to God's input. And it's like he's saying, I don't want to remain the person I am. I want to be all that you've created me to be.

David knows that God knows all about him at this stage, and confesses that despite all he has acknowledged of knowing God, he still has lingering anxiety, and that's understandable.

And incidentally, God doesn't mind if we say that to him. If we are failing, unfalling, faltering, in any regard, God doesn't mind if we come to him and say, God, I just need your help.

Pick me up again. Forgive me of that. Whatever it was. Imagine David wrote this psalm over time. Each line, a slow and even revelation of what he feels in his heart.

Or as I would props call them, a wow revelation, or realization. God, you know everything about me. Sometimes we don't want God to know everything, do we?

[11 : 49] But oh, when we realize God knows all about us, and that when we can come to that throne of grace, bow before him in tears sometimes, or to really pray for people, intercessory prayer for people, like I was sat in the funeral yesterday, God knows and hears, answers that prayer, and it's a wow revelation, and realization.

I'm sure David would find a quiet place, away from the battlefields, not only physically, the battles he attended, and was involved in, but the battlefield of his mind as well.

He would be overwhelmed at times, by people who had questions, because he was a king. He was the director, he had to guide and do everything. But in that place of quiet, he would slowly but surely, over time I'm sure, write the words of the psalm, very carefully, with God's inspired, move upon his heart.

And don't forget, when he was a young shepherd boy, he played the harp, and ultimately he would play for King Saul. He would write music, he would write words, and that's where these have come from.

This is a song, this psalm is a song of God's precious thoughts, toward David, and therefore toward us as well. And there are times, when we need to find a place, set aside to be quiet and pray.

[13 : 15] John put a picture of me, sat on a hill with him the other day, when we took two or three hours out, and it was a beautiful sunny day, up on the moors. And it was just so good, I felt so blessed, to be there with John, and just hear each other's hearts, and spend time.

It helped me no end. We need to find those places aside, for God to speak his truth, into our hearts, as we sang just now.

But of course Jesus, in Matthew 6, 6 says, but when you pray, go away by yourself. Shut the door behind you, the world, the problems, the difficulties.

It's like, you know, it's having a prayer room, isn't it? If you haven't ever seen the video, the prayer room, I strongly recommend you do. It is incredible. Having that private place.

And Jesus says, and then pray to your father, who hears. Jesus himself, had essential times, of isolation from the world, and to be in close proximity, to God his father.

[14 : 19] That was so, so important to him. To be, if you like, in a place, without any rigid formality. it's the closeness, of God, in those moments, that we look for.

I have said here, that when I've been in those places, and I'm not very good with quiet, but when I'm in those places, sometimes I've felt, it's like a tender hearted warmth, and affection, of our father's embrace.

It's like nothing else, this world can give you. Sandy and I will, sort of hold each other, at times of difficulty, or when I come home, it's so great, to be welcomed in that way. But it's nothing, like the father's embrace.

In those moments. But David knew, that God cared enough, about him, to search his heart, and see if there was, any wicked way in him. And then to lead David, sorry, lead David, in the way that is everlasting.

And it's not just, that God knows everything. Listen to this. It's not that God knows everything. He knows you. And it's not, just that God is everywhere.

[15 : 34] He is with you. And it's not that God created everything. He created you. Next slide, please.

Just think of those things. He knows you. He's with you. He created you. He's not going to abandon you. And that's why he's so enthusiastic, with his grace and love and mercy, to actually bring us to a place of that relationship with him, rather than people like I used to be, that just discredited him, gave no thought to him, didn't want to know at all.

And it occurred to me that David, David, in his time as a boy, as a shepherd, would have also met thousands of people as a king. If you were to sit down and think of your whole life, how many people you've met, that could influence you, or possibly know you.

David met thousands, from lowly shepherds living out on a mountain, to luxurious palaces of kings and enemies. Good people, in some cases, that treated him well, and cared for his safety.

But as a young boy, he went face to face with an evil giant. He was ridiculed by those who loved him, even his wife, when he danced and celebrated in joy.

[16 : 58] She thought he was making a fool of himself, in front of everybody. He was cast aside by those trying to dethrone him, even his son Absalom. And he lost friends and made bad mistakes.

He regretted all his life. Haven't we all? But I wonder how many of them knew, the hidden depths of David's heart.

None. They wouldn't have ever known the depths of David's heart, as God did. Not even his treasured friends. He had 30 mighty warriors, that were with him at all times.

They fought alongside him, doubtless saved his life on many occasions. Not only were they there to fight the enemy, but protect David in particular. And not the three brave men, who risked their lives, to satisfy his thirst, when he said, oh, that I could have a drink of water, from Bethlehem, when the town was taken by the Philistines.

But those guys went under cover, as it were, in, got some water from the well, and brought it back. But not even they would have known David's heart, in the depths, the hidden depths.

[18 : 10] In fact, when they got that water for him, he was so concerned, they put their lives in danger, he wouldn't drink it, because he cared for them so much.

It was a wonderful moment. But we keep the ugly bits of our lives secret, don't we, from those around us. But thankfully, and I mean that, thankfully we can't hide anything, from our Heavenly Father.

Because if we could, that wouldn't be God, would it? Sadly, so many relationships, in this world today, are built on deception. Not letting people know, much about us, because we, aren't sure, what would happen, if they found out.

That's why people, lie, on their CVs, when they're trying to get a job, at a big firm, or something of that nature. And we've seen quite often, in the news over the years, people who have been found out, and it's just been horrendous.

But God knows our hearts. And despite David's highs and lows, especially the lows, he says to God, you know me. And in those three simple words, David's heart, mind and soul, are an open book, aren't they?

[19 : 27] A complete transparency. And every word and deed, is out in the open, to God. Imagine if you had a superpower, that enabled you, to know the thoughts, of everyone around you.

Particularly husbands, about your wives. Actually wives, about your husbands as well. I don't know why, I looked at Deirdre then, that was just, pure nothing.

So, Mel Gibson in February 2000, was in a film, that was called, What Women Want. It was a blockbuster film, which took, 374 million pounds, at the box office.

I'd love to know, who attended that film. Was it predominantly men? Or was it predominantly women? Ironically, he thought, Mel Gibson, playing the executive part, in the film, thought he was, God's gift to women.

But he could hear the truth, what the ladies were thinking, when they were in his vicinity, and what they thought about him, and it wasn't good. But you know, David came to realize, God knew everything about him too, and it wasn't good either.

[20 : 38] But God, loved him. God, cared for his future, and God wanted to ensure, that he didn't remain, as he was, same with us, he wanted, to enable, him, and us, to grow in grace, and serve him.

I'm sure every husband, would like to understand, their wives a little better, but we'll leave that, for a future date, maybe a week, who knows. God knows even, the basic aspects, of who we are, the simple routine, everyday things.

You know, sometimes, it's easy, when you're looking, at Christians, as I used to do, before I got saved, to look at Christians, and think, that, everything that went on, in church on Sunday, was all that they were doing, in relationship, to God.

And when they came out, of church, the rest of the week, six days, they lived their lives, completely, separate, from God. Now, I feel terrible, that's how I thought, was going on, and in some cases, I'm sure it was.

But that's not, what God wants us to do. He wants to engage, in you and I, in every routine, every single thing, you do, every day. And David says, when I sit down, you know exactly, where I'm sat.

[22 : 06] Sometimes, we may not, or shouldn't be, in the place we sat, but other times, God has placed us there, to sit where we were, so that next to us, there's somebody, who needs, to know of his love.

And we can do that. David says, when I get up, you're conscious, of every creak, of my bones. He didn't say, the creak of the bones, but he said, when I sit down, I went out, you know all about it, Lord.

You know my thoughts, the ones even, I'd rather you didn't. And when I go out, and when I lay down, you never sleep, you watch over me, you know all about me.

When I'm about to speak, you know the words, that should make us, sometimes think twice, about what we're going to say. But even the words, that are on my lips, now, God knows about them, even before I say them.

My prayer is, that God will place, his words on my lips. Next slide. Please. And he says, you protect me, your hand is on me, because you care, you guide me, from place to place, from circumstance to circumstance.

[23 : 09] Yes, he was a king, and he needed God's wisdom, but so do you and I. And the Bible says in James, if you need wisdom, ask God, and he will give it. And sometimes, you feel that nudge of God, to go to speak to somebody, to just embrace somebody, or to give something for somebody.

I was speaking to one of our CMA members, in a cafe yesterday, and she said, that she got a message, from her husband. And her husband, had said, he felt prompted, to give a hundred pounds, into a certain situation, where they knew, that there was a need.

And he asked her to pray, to see if there was a confirmation, from her perspective. And she prayed, and contacted him back, and said, yeah, let's go with it. But before he did, he had a sense, that God was saying to him, now, give ten times that amount.

And so he contacted his wife, and said, I think God's asking us, to give more, this amount. To which she did, she prayed, and as she prayed, she felt that God was saying, yes.

So she contacted him, and said, yes, go ahead. So he withdrew the money, and he handed it to the person, and they both said, thank you God, for that prompt. And wonderfully, mysteriously, and strangely, a woman then, got in touch with them, knocked on their door.

[24 : 41] And as, the door opened, and she was there, she had an envelope in her hand. And she said, God has told me, I've got to come and see you, and give you this envelope. And what's in it, there is absolutely no way, I'm going to take it home.

It is from God, therefore, you have to have it. And so she opened the envelope, and looked at the, check that was in it, it was for a thousand pounds. The woman didn't know, why she gave it, but she knew, God had prompted her to do it.

Your hand is on me, because you care. Not only for me, but for the people, you want me to be, a means of blessing. And she said, it didn't matter, how much we gave away, because it was God's anyway.

But then God gave it back to us, not to make us equally rich, if you like, because, you know, in the way that they'd been before, they gave the money away, but to show he cared, and that he could provide, through them, and to them.

And David says, in the psalm, such knowledge is too wonderful, for me, to take in. And so did these wonderful people. Next slide.

[25 : 50] Oh sorry, it's up, I beg your pardon, leave that there. So omnipresent, he's with you everywhere. Consider the places Jesus appeared, places he went to, places he engaged, beaches, mountains, the temple, a well, walking on water, boat, donkey, Pharisee's home, leper's colony, market, campfire, wedding, and graveyard.

Such a variety of places. But then David says, and I'm not quite sure, why he would say this, but he's just proving it to himself, I suppose, and God's proving it to us, that he says, where can I go from your spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence? Heavens, you're there. Depths, you're there. God's constant knowledge of us, is a comfort, rather than a curse.

He's with us, therefore that's a place of rejoicing for us. Everywhere Jesus went, he listened to what his father said for him to do, and what his father prompted him to say.

Wherever we go, you cannot flee from the spirit of God. Of course, we know that Jonah tried that. Look what happened to him.

[27 : 10] He came full circle, but ended up in the mouth of something he would have preferred not to do. He would have been. Why would we want to escape from God?

There was a moment where, Jesus said to the disciples, because of what had happened, where people wandered off, will you leave me as well? And they said, why would we?

You've got the words of eternal life. Where else could we go? Do we really want to go back to our old life, and walk away from God that we know, and the relationship we have with God, and this family of church, and all around the world, et cetera, et cetera.

No way. It always amazes me that I keep meeting Christians who feel God's let them down, and they walk away from God. I just wonder how much of God they knew in the first place.

Please don't do that. If you have any sense that life's getting too hard, lean on God, lean on church, and let us walk with you in that way. He has plans for our lives, and he knows best, and his provision is perfect.

[28 : 15] God is present everywhere, and there is absolutely no corner, or dimension of the universe hidden from him. Heaven isn't too high for him, and hell isn't too low.

But greater still than all that, is that God knows and cares for his lost children, and brings us to himself, to the point of being born again, as Jesus said.

He knows all about us, and he doesn't want to leave us as we were. He doesn't want to leave us distantly. He draws us in. When I went on Thursday night to Bournemouth, and I met with Colin, who's in a worldly sense, dying of cancer, we were praying for him in the evening time, and Cliff, one of our other friends, read these words, over their lives, and he just, from the same psalm, he didn't know I was going to preach on that today.

Cliff read out, for Colin, you were created. God knew you, in that knitted together state, in your mother's wounds.

God's eyes saw your unformed body, all the days ordained for you, were written in his book, before one of them came to be. And David said it in the same psalm, how precious are your thoughts to me, oh God.

[29 : 35] You know, when our daughters have had babies, and we've been so excited, and all that kind of stuff, but you see that little picture, don't you, the scan, thingamajig, it's just, wow, I can't ever see your face, or I just don't, and Sandy can see your form there.

I think, oh wow, yeah, that's really good. But I don't quite fully appreciate what the picture is of, but when the baby comes, what a difference. But God knew us, right from that time of conception, all the way through, and then the world says, well, a baby that's so old, in its mother's womb, can be aborted.

But God sees a person, in that womb, from the day of conception. Then David, in this same psalm, comes to a place, where he expresses a longing, for righteousness and justice.

And I think at times, when we read this kind of thing in the Bible, we want to get around it, because we're not entirely sure why. But David said, if only you, God, would slay the wicked. And a minute ago, he was saying, you know all about me, my comings and goings.

And then he goes on about, I want to slay you. Why, you know, God, why don't you slay them? Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty. Then as if he realises, he may be going a bit too far, he says, search me, oh God, and know my heart.

[31 : 00] I'm not saying that's exactly why he's written it, but aren't we a little bit like that sometimes? Really going for it, going for it with God, and then suddenly we find a situation, and we think, oh man, those people drive me crazy.

And then you think, no, that's not how you want me to be, God. Search my heart. Transparent and out in the open, Lord, all those things that are offensive to you, all those things that are making me anxious, because I know I shouldn't be like that, see if there's any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

In regards to David saying, if only you, God would slay the wicked, et cetera, don't forget, that era was an environment of battle, and death and horrendous situations.

That's not the case now, thankfully, although you would believe that. You wouldn't believe that when you think of what's happening across the world. Oswald Chambers said, about God knowing us, he said, God knows me, is a child of God's most precious possession we could ever have.

You remember when Jesus had raised from the dead, and Mary was at the tomb, thought he was a gardener, and said to him, do you know where they put my Lord's body?

[32 : 28] She didn't recognize Jesus, after he'd come back to life, outside the grave. It was only when Jesus said, Mary, that it made all the difference.

That personal connection, through that name, but not just the name, she knew, that God knew, all about her, in the same moment. And A.W. Tozer, the guy, incredible writing, he said, I think that most Christians, would be better pleased, if the Lord, did not inquire into their personal affairs, too closely.

They want, him to save them, and keep them happy, and take them to heaven at last, but not to be too inquisitive, about their conduct, or service. And if we're like that, let's stop being like that.

Don't box up God, in a way, that this is my life, and this is my church, on Sunday. It's nothing like that, at all.

Last slide, please. Consider this, if you will. Our God, who knows, knows a great deal more, than we ever knew, about ourselves, incidentally.

[33 : 43] And God, has taken all, the initiative, to change, where we were, where we are today, and where we will be, if we trust, and look at him, throughout the rest of our lives.

However long or short, that is on this earth. He knew we were lost, we didn't, but he put in place, an opportunity, for us to receive salvation.

He put somebody in my path, that told me, that God was real, in their lives, and that I would be, I am loved by God, and I should, put my trust in him.

I didn't initially, but it all began, in that way, if you like. He knows, all about our sin, and ignorance, and God knew, we gave little thought to him, when, or whether he existed, and that if there was, somewhere after death, it was probably boring, so why bother?

He knew all that, but yet he still, persisted by grace, and mercy, to reach us, that we may know, that truth, and that truth, could set us free. Or as our great friend, Sid, from Cheshire, he is the funniest man, I know, and he's done some amazingly, crazy things in his life, but thankfully, God saved him, many years ago, and all he does now, is tell people about, Jesus.

[35 : 02] Sid used to say, before he got saved, I thought I was a reasonably, decent man, and when I died, if there was a God, in heaven, I assumed, God would be reasonably, pleased to see me, when I died, if I turned up, at the gates, I thought I was a reasonably, decent man, and that he would be, reasonably pleased, to see me.

That's such, a truthful statement, from a wonderful man, who has abandoned, the world, to serve Christ. And then, in closing, I think it's essential, that we find, a quiet place, away from the battlefields, of our minds, and our mind, of the people, that exhaust us, and read this psalm, and I hope you do that today.

Let each line, be a revelation, from the heart, of our all-knowing father. And then, with David's courage, I hope we can say, search me God, and know my heart.

Test me, and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is, any offensive way, in me at all. And if so, lead me in the way everlasting.

I don't want to remain, the person I am, and I don't think you do either. I want to be, all that God has created me to be, and I believe you do too.

[36 : 27] Can we just bow our heads?