

October 3, 2021

“He Knows Us”
Psalm 139

FCF: Despair of not being known
PROPOSITION: (anchor) God wants us to know
 (magnet) that He knows us.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble is the story of a young donkey from the town of Oatsdale who collects pebbles “of unusual shape and color.” One day, he finds a round red pebble that grants wishes. Unfortunately, a lion scares the little donkey and, as a defense, he wishes himself into being a rock - the only thing he could think of at the moment. Given the situation, it wasn’t a bad choice. But Sylvester is unable to undo the wish. The rest of the story then involves his longing to go back, a frantic search for him, and the seeming hopelessness of the situation.

Every time I read that story to my kids, Sylvester’s plight unsettled me. Why? After a bit of reflection, I think it’s because it reminds me of the felt pain at times of not being seen or known. Perhaps you can identify with that. It’s terribly common. No few studies point to an epidemic of loneliness today. And that’s pre-COVID. Well, what does God’s Word say to us?

SCRIPTURE READING: [Psalm 139](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

The Martian - a great movie and an even better book. It’s the story of Mark Watney, an American astronaut who is stranded alone on Mars in 2035. At first, no one knows he is alive. And he has no long-range radio. So Watney adopts the posture of “working the problem,” taking each obstacle in turn as they come, in order to survive. He treats the wounds from his accident. He plant potatoes so as to have a longterm food supply. To establish contact with NASA, he takes an excursion to recover an older lander and rover. Using them, he is able to communicate. And thus begins a series of intense conversations and exchanges so as to bring about a rescue.

Both sides are desperate to establish and maintain communication, to let the other party know that they are there. There’s something of that here in this text. The theme throughout is that of “knowing”. The idea is repeated ([READ Psalm 139:1-2a, 4, 6, 23, and 14](#)). What is it we learn of God here? And of ourselves? He wants us to know. He longs for us to know. To know what? To know that we are known. God wants us, each of us, to know that we are known.

That breaks down in two parts. First, He knows us. Second, what it means to know that.

I. GOD KNOWS US

First, God knows us. We hear this in vv.1-16. We are thoroughly, exhaustively known.

A) We Are Seen

1. Across the board

In vv.1-6, we read that we are seen. And this is across the board. There is absolutely nothing walled off. The Lord knows our every thought, our every word, our every deed. He sees us.

2. To the uttermost

And He sees us to the uttermost. Not partly but before, during, and after. We are utterly seen and known. This is what theologians refer to as God's omniscience. He knows all things.

B) We Are Never Alone

But it's not just that. In vv.7-12, we learn that we are never alone. He is always with us.

1. Inescapable knowledge

His is an inescapable knowledge. David asks the hypothetical question, "Where shall I go from your Spirit?" And the answer is simply. "Nowhere. You cannot escape my gaze or reach."

2. Ever-present care

The Lord's is an ever-present care. David speaks of opposing pairs - from the highest to the lowest places, over the horizon to the east or the west. God is there. This is His omnipresence.

C) This Has Always Been So

And then, as we get to vv.13-16, we learn that these assurances have always been so.

1. Stunning answer

"How can this be?" we wonder. How can God be all-knowing and present? To which He says, "Don't you know? I made you." It's a stunning answer, in stark contrast to the materialist myth.

2. Creative skill

I'd be remiss if I didn't note that David's words clearly point to the value of life in the womb. God is our Creator. And we have been made with care and skill. Note the poetic language. He formed us, each part of who we are. And He laid out the path of our lives before they began.

We are so seen and known! Each of us. Thoroughly and exhaustively by the living God!

Application:

But this psalm is no bare theological treatise. It is a rich personal statement, landing upon David. How does this intimate eternal knowledge land upon you? There are two basic ways to respond here. One is to feel exposed, threatened, and angered. You don't want to be known. You simply can't bear it. But the other response, that of the Christian, is very different. It is to know we have the righteousness of the Son and the delight of the Father. It is to know His love, to know we can trust and rest in this knowledge and not feel it to be a threat but a great comfort.

How does this land on you? Do you know that you are known, that God knows you?

II. OUR KNOWING THIS

That takes us to vv.17-24 and our second point - our knowing this. What would it mean to have your heart gripped by these things? What would it look like? David goes on to show us.

A) Utterly Overwhelmed

1. Prizing his standing

It begins in vv.17-18 with being utterly overwhelmed. God's thoughts of David are precious to him. Meaning that David values and prizes his standing. It means absolutely everything to him.

2. Unable to quantify

Such thoughts and their value cannot be quantified. It is hopelessly beyond any counting.

B) Whole-Hearted Devotion

So he is utterly overwhelmed. Then, in vv.19-22, we read of a whole-hearted devotion.

1. Reality of this fallen world

David faces the reality of a fallen world. He looks around and sees the blasphemy and treachery, man's hatred of God and his fellow man. And it grieves him. Things ought not to be this way.

2. Loyalty to his Father

For he feels a deep loyalty to his God. So much so that he distances himself, wanting to see this come to an end, and speaks of his "hatred" and his "enemies" - not with personal vengeance but a deep desire for the elimination of evil, of all that grieves the Lord and opposes His purposes.

Illustration:

I was speaking about this just yesterday with some friends, about how it is good and right for a Christian to be angry. It is wrong to be okay with what is wrong. And right to be grieved with what is not right. That's what we see with David. And even more with the Son of David.

C) Humbled Longing

David is overwhelmed, filled with a whole-hearted devotion. And a humbled longing.

1. Reality of his fallen heart

He faces the reality of both a fallen world and his fallen heart. He looks not just around him but within him. And he knows that the seed of the same things lie within the soil of his own soul.

2. Pleading to his Father

And so he ends this prayer in vv.23-24, pleading with God. "Show me where I need to change, where my heart has gone astray. Have mercy upon me and help me. Heal me from within."

This is what it looks like to really and truly know we are really and truly known by God.

Application:

The one builds the other up from inside us, causing it to overflow from us. Here's the question. Are we able to pray this way? Are we overwhelmed by God's knowledge and care for us? Is there a whole-hearted devotion and a humbled longing evidenced in our prayers? If not, it may well mean we need to go back and let the reality of God's intimate eternal knowledge set in. Put another way, if we cannot say the words of vv.17-24, it may mean we have not heard vv.1-16.

May the Lord help us, each of us. May He help us to hear and to pray as He means for His disciples to pray. For He wants us to know this. He wants us to know that we are known.

CONCLUSION:

Friends, this is good news. And truly needed. I alluded to an epidemic of loneliness in our culture. Which is part of the explanation for some trends we hear about. Goat yoga - yoga practiced in the presence and in tandem with live goats. The point, of course, is not just to sweat

but to have a baby goat climb on you as you sweat. For this bleating cuteness is said to promote emotional and physical wellness. The lengths to which people will go all because of the longing.

But don't let the oddity of such things fool you. These signs of loneliness and the desire to be known show up in other ways. We might even say "normal" ways. Why, after all, do we feel such a compulsive need to continually check our email, to read every text as it comes in (no matter who we are talking with), and to incessantly scan the responses to our posts on social media? Why are we constantly wondering and worrying about what others think of us? It's not hard to see. It's the same as with the folks doing goat yoga. We want to be known, to connect.

Not just with each other but ultimately with the Lord. What does He say in response? Psalm 139. He wants us to know. To know what? He wants us to know that we are known.

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