

Psalm 139 Sermon Notes

Main Point: Knowing God & being known by Him leads us to desire His ways.

Intro

The idea of being fully known is a notion that most of us probably cringe at. No human knows you better than you do. You know the thoughts that run through your mind on a daily basis. You know what you think in conversations with others even if you don't say it. You are usually aware of the motives that you have when making daily decisions. You know the secret struggles that you have or have had. You know the faces that you make in the bathroom mirror that no one else sees. Because we know ourselves, we can all relate to thinking that we are way worse or way more odd than people think we are. It would horrify us to think that people could see what we see. It horrifies us because we know how people are. We are afraid of how people would look at us, or push us away, or make fun of us, or even take advantage of us. We know that people can be selfish, so we are hesitant to let people in.

What if there was someone who knew all that you know about you and more, yet has perfect love for you. One that sees it all and has extended a welcome into a relationship. One who knows your brokenness but instead of pushing you away, they invite you in.

This is what we discover in Psalm 139. David writes in a way that is deeply personal and deeply theological at the same time. Whether we went to seminary, or read our Bibles, or have been to church regularly, or not, we all have a theology. Our theology is simply what we believe about God.

The well known theologian, A.W. Tozer once said "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."

What we see in this Psalm is what comes to mind when David thinks about God and it shows us so much about who God is, and who we are in Him. My prayer is that today, you and I would both gain a deeper understanding of how well we are known and loved by God and how knowing God is the greatest thing that we can strive for in this life and forever.

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 139

The first 6 verses speak to God knowing David, and us. He is Omniscient (all-knowing)

1 O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

- LORD = YHWH
 - There is no mistake who this prayer is addressed to. When we see "LORD" in Scripture, it's referring to Yahweh or Jehovah, the one true God, he is not

a god among the pantheon of pagan worship during David's life or ours. This is the Creator God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who would send his Son Jesus to take away the sins of the world. THIS GOD has searched and known David, and he has searched and known us.

- The gods that people often worshiped at the time were not only NOT all-knowing, all-powerful, or all-present, they were believed to be fallible and selfish. Does this sound familiar?
 - How often do we begin to build trust in the people, things, and circumstances around us? Trust that can only find its truest end in the One True God.
 - We build up idols in our lives. Whether it be comfort, success, meaning, value, pleasure, or something else, nothing that this world has to offer cares for you or knows you like the one true God. What's more, none of them have the power to save you.

2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

- **Sit down...Rise up** - This is here to let us know that God is not just aware of the big things in our lives, but that he knows even the mundane things. He knows when and how you brush your teeth or when you scratch your head or pick your nose. Luke 12:7 tells us that he knows the number of hairs on your head. For some that might be more than others.
 - There is nothing about your life that catches God off guard. He knows all of it.
 - He is mighty enough that his attention is ALWAYS on you. Don't let this give you, as the kids say, main character energy. Don't be mistaken, he is the main character, but we can feel humbled and blessed by the fact that the main character knows our every move, and it matters to him.
- **Discern my thoughts from afar** - Not only does he know every move you make, he knows every thought that crosses your mind, the intentional ones and the unintentional.
 - Imagine if we were able to connect your mind to a projector and project every thought that you have throughout the day up on the big screen in here for everyone to see. I don't think that even the most likable people in the room would be as liked any more. Our thoughts are scary sometimes. Our thoughts can be hateful, sinful, unloving, selfish, and more. God sees them ALL. Yet he still desires to have a relationship with us.

3 You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

- "My path...my lying down" - There is not a moment of movement or resting that God is now aware of.
 - Psalm 121 tells us that God never sleeps or slumbers. Even when our limited energy needs recharge, he is awake and watching over us.

- Acquainted with all my ways - David doesn't say that God is acquainted with some of his ways, but all. He is fully known.
 - God is never surprised by what you do. Even when you sin, his world is not shattered, you didn't catch him off guard. He is not shaken.

4 Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

- We can't speak a word that the LORD wasn't already expecting, what's more is that he has known every word you would ever speak since before you came into being.

5 You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

- This is good news for any person that trusts in the Lord. When we are hemmed in by Yahweh, when his hand is upon us, we are protected on all sides. Not that we will never endure suffering but we can rest in the fact that even that suffering is permitted by the One that cares more about our good than anyone else, and he knows what he is doing with it.
- When struggles come we can trust that the Lord is not wasting it but He is sanctifying us
 - **Romans 5:3-5 | 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.**

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

- The last 5 verses showed us God's tremendous knowledge of David, which we can translate over to us. This knowledge that God knows everything about him is too wonderful and unattainable for him, and it is for us as well. What knowledge about ourselves is so deep that we can't even attain it? God knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows us from the surface all the way down to the atomic level. He knows our deepest desires, needs, and intentions, even the ones that we can't quite grasp. He doesn't just know our thoughts, but he knows, on the soul level, why we think them. He doesn't just know our actions, but he sees the very bottom of why we act the way we do. He knows us deeply and intimately, to depths that we will never fully understand. This is exactly why we can trust him.

Verses 7-12 speak to God's Omni-presence. He is always with us.

7 Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

- David isn't asking these questions because he is trying to figure out how to escape God, he is asking these things because he is in awe of his inability to.
- These questions point to God's omnipresence - the reality that he is everywhere at all times.

8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

- Even in the places beyond what we see, God is present and Lord over them. Whether we go to heaven and experience God's unhindered grace or hell, implied by Sheol, and experience his wrath, we still cannot escape the presence of God. He's everywhere.

9 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

- "Take the wings of the morning" - this is a metaphor that is referring to the dawn break. How the sun quickly floods and runs across the sky at sunrise.
 - If David were to run as far as he could to the other side of the world, he couldn't escape God.
- If he were to plunge to the deepest depths of the sea. He was speaking of the Mediterranean, because that's what he knew, but we now know that the oceans and seas sink to depths of almost 7 miles, and even there the presence of God exists.

10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

- At the farthest reaches of the earth, the deepest depths of the seas, and even the ends of the universe, God's right hand is leading and holding his people.
 - The right hand was culturally significant. This was the hand of skill and strength. It is an especially secure place for God's people.

11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," 12 even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

- Verses 11 & 12 teach us at least two things:
 - There is no hiddenness for God. What we or others try to keep in the dark is as clear as day to him. Those hidden sins that we do when no one is looking, or that we try to push to the back of our minds and not deal with, are no secret to Him.

- Not only are they in the light for him, but in walking with him, he wants us to deal with them.
 - **1 John 1:5-7 | 5** This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **6** If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.
- There are people in this room today that are still convinced that you and God will be alright if you can just work really hard at being a good person and doing the right things or that you'll be safe as long as you said the write words when you repeated after the preacher at VBS when you were a kid. The problem with both of those is this, that we have darkness inside of us, wrong motives, and desires and hidden things that nothing we can do or say can cover, but only the blood of Jesus can heal and redeem, and you still haven't fully believed the gospel: That you and I are absolutely broken beyond repair, and there is no amount of good we can do to fix it, yet Jesus came and lived among us, he lived the perfect life that we couldn't live and died the death that we deserve, and came back to life and currently rules and reigns over all creation, and because of what He did, we can place our faith in him and him alone for real rescue and salvation, and once we do so, we don't say "'check' nailed that down, I can go back to what I was doing before." No, then after he has given us a new identity as a child of the King of Kings, we begin to live differently, not to gain salvation, but because we already have. We begin to walk in the light, bringing our dark hidden things to light so that he can deal with them and make us more like him.
- "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," - Does that statement sound familiar to you? Does that maybe sound like the dark night of the soul? When it feels like the whole world is falling down around you and the suffering is just too much. When anxiety gets the best of you and you feel like you are going to be utterly swallowed by darkness.
 - If God is with us, what this passage says is that even in the darkness, there is light.

- God never promised us that we would not walk through difficulty, but that, if we are his, he will be with us through it. Remember the words of the 23rd Psalm. David writes:
 - Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
 - God is with us, bringing light into our darkness.

Verses 13-18 speak to how God crafted David and us.

13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

- Not only is God omniscient (all-knowing), and Omnipresent (all-present), David reminds us of the care that God takes in creating us.
- This and the following verses show us clearly that God holds human life in high regard, and that it begins in the very smallest forms within a mother's womb. Not only is an unborn child more than just a simple clump of cells, but God is actively involved in the formation of that child throughout the process.
- God has a deep care for both born and unborn children and as His people we must as well. As followers of Christ, our aim should be for our hearts to care for what God's heart cares about. While our culture says that unborn children can be discarded if they don't fit into your plan, God says I created this special person and I am piecing them together all along the way.
- PLEASE HEAR THIS - If you have believed the philosophy of the world on this matter, there is grace for you, Christ loves you, and wants you. I'm just telling you what is obvious about God's heart on this.
- The next statement adds even more value to this reality.

14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

- The Hebrew word for "fearfully" here is not meant to convey a picture of being afraid, but instead is meant to convey awe, reverence, honor and respect. There is a special care taken in making us.
- The Christian Standard Bible words it this way: "I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made."
- **Illustration:** Some of you may think that I am pretty boring for this, but I love to watch videos of craftsmen at work. People who can start with raw materials and make it into something great. The other day, I watched a video of a man building what would eventually be a side table. When the video started he was gluing

together various types of wood and the different colors were beautiful. I assumed he was making a nice cutting board. As the video went on he made more and more of what seemed to be different size cutting boards that would eventually come together to make a very unique and beautiful table. Each part took time and energy with cutting, gluing, waiting, sanding, routing and more. I would assume that in total, this one table took days if not a couple of weeks to build, not to mention the attention to detail that was taken all along the way. I thought to myself, the right person might pay thousands for that table.

I can't afford to pay thousands for a side table. I'm on the kind of budget where if we are in need of a side table and we happen to be in Atlanta, I'll probably stop by Ikea and get one of those tables that comes in a box and a couple of different colors. They churn them out on the production line without much thought given to them apart from getting cheap, functional tables in a whole bunch of houses. You wouldn't expect to pay much at all for these and that is the whole point.

So many of us walk through life thinking that's what we are. We are just a run of the mill human thrown out into the world with very little purpose but to live and die and pay a few taxes along the way. But that is not how God sees you. You were FEARFULLY and WONDERFULLY made! God put you together with great care, like a craftsman does with whatever they are crafting. Like the table that was worth thousands, God gave great thought to you. He has a purpose for you. As we saw earlier, he has ordered your steps, and has a plan for you, and in your brokenness and sin he died for you. You have great value to the one who defines what value is. You are loved.

- God did not make any mistakes in making you. He crafted you, and he loves you. So much so that he died for you.

15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

- "The depths of the earth" is another metaphor for the mother's womb, and the picture of the first man being formed from the dust. He says that David, you and I were INTRICATELY WOVEN. God cares about you. He has not lost sight of you and he never will.

16 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.

- He saw you before you were ever formed. It was like he already had the blueprints for your unique creation.
- Before you were ever a blip on the radar, the LORD knew the days that you would live. We can rest in the security of knowing that our future is in his hands, and if we have surrendered our lives to him, no matter when that last day comes for us, we get him.

Verses 17-24 David reacts to this knowledge.

17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! **18** If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

- David gives us a beautiful picture here of what the Christian life should look like. He loves his God, and he is in absolute awe over all of God's many precious thoughts.
- It reminds me of the story of Mary and Martha. Jesus said that Mary chose the good portion, which was placing herself at the feet of Jesus and hanging on his every word. He said that this could not be taken from her. Moments spent at the feet of Jesus, in His Word, in prayer, in quiet meditation on the things of God, and among His people, are like mining the greatest treasures we can fathom. These are the most precious moments, because they feed how we see the world. Like David, here sings about the preciousness of God's thoughts, we should treasure them as well.
- Here, David's prayer takes a quick turn, but it makes sense.

19 Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! **20** They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain. **21** Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? **22** I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies.

- The tone quickly changes from beholding the attributes and workings of God to hatred toward God's enemies.
- His enjoyment of God leads to zealotry towards God's enemies. This reminds me of the famous story of David and Goliath. David's great love and trust for the One True God leads him to battle the giant. David was only planning to bring his brothers some food on the battlefield, but when he rolls up he hears someone shouting curses at God, and he wouldn't have it.
- In Ephesians, Paul speaks about the enemies that we face.
 - **Ephesians 6:10-12 | 10** Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. **11** Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to

stand against the schemes of the devil. **12** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

- These enemies aren't God's created image bearers, but demonic deceivers, that lie and tempt our weak flesh. God's enemies are sin, our own broken fleshly desires, the devil, and as we draw closer to him the more equipped we are against these enemies. This begins with trusting him as Lord. When that happens our identity changes. We are no longer slaves to sin, but set free to live in his righteousness.
- Our love for God, should lead us to hate the evil that wages war against him.
- We can trust that God will punish all of his enemies. The book of revelation is clear that those who trust Christ on the winning team.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

- David doesn't want to be like the enemies of God, and neither should we. If Christ is our Lord, then, though we fail and sin, our constant desire should be that the Lord would point out the evil in us so that we can repent of it and walk in his everlasting ways.
 - **Romans 12:9** Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.
 - **Hebrews 12:1-2** | **1**Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2** looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
- The closer we grow in relationship with our Saviour, Jesus, the more we realize His goodness, and our badness, and our need for his goodness.

Conclusion

- You and I are fully known by God. He sees the deepest depths of our soul and knows what we need.
- You are not just made to exist, you were crafted for God's glory and he has a purpose for your life.
- The world offers nothing but darkness, but in Christ there is hope, meaning, belonging, and salvation

- Believe in him, trust in him, and walk in his ways.
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Discussion Questions:

- What are some of the lies you tend to believe about God?
- What do we know to be true about God?
- How do those beliefs affect how you live your life?