

Psalm 139:1-6

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we look over the years, the pastors can recall a number of instances of talking with brothers and sisters who felt completely isolated from everyone and everything. That's a horrible feeling, isn't it? Nobody really knows you and nobody really cares. I thought about what God will say to those who reject Him: "I never knew you; depart from me..." (Mt. 7:23) That's eternal isolation.

As has been stated, Psalm 139 is a favorite, and a blessing when talking to members of our faith family who have been hit with that icy moment of, *You only have so much time*. I recall these words of a fellow by the name of Jerry W. McCant: "In a world filled with causes for worry and anxiety, we need something tougher than 'positive thinking' or even 'possibility thinking.' We need the peace of God standing guard over our hearts and minds."

That's what we want and must have: The peace that knows God knows us; the peace that knows . . .

## HE IS ALWAYS THERE

### I. Do We Matter?

I suspect there are those moments, maybe many, when we consider how insignificant we are to this world. We might be very important to certain people, but not to this world. And so, the question: Is God There? The answer to that begins with these words of Scripture which have made their appearance here countless times: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world..." (Eph. 1:3-4a) When you get a chance, look in a mirror. Before creation God chose the person looking back at you to be His!

Many years ago, the commentator P. E. Kretzmann wrote:

...the apostle now enumerates those (blessings) of the eternal election of grace: Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. God chose us, He picked us out, He selected us, He set us aside for Himself; it was a free act on His part...He chose us in Christ. The spiritual blessings have been appropriated to us on the basis of Christ's work, but the election took place before the foundation of the world.

Again, it was God's will and purpose to choose us and make us His by working faith in us to know Jesus as our payment for sin; as the One who has secured eternal life for us. We hear that all the time in this sanctuary, but isn't it absolutely amazing how down, and sometimes depressed, how disappointed and disgusted we can become with life or ourselves...at times? And with that are the absurdities this world and the father of lies and murder, Satan, throw at us!

The Scriptures say, "For consider your calling brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth." (I Cor 1:26) However, the Scriptures then say "God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are." (I Cor. 1:28) God took us, dead in our sin, worth nothing to this world, and made us alive in Christ because He loved us and wanted to. On the other hand, those who see themselves as worthy and deserving of God's love - think they are "something" - stand before God as nothing.

God help us to hold on to these words: "For the mountains may depart and the hills removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,' says the Lord, who has compassion on you." (Is. 54:10) And that brings us to the importance of our text:

## II. Hemmed in.

O 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, O LORD, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. (vv. 1-5)

Have you ever cried out to God something along the line of, “Do you see what’s going on here?” or “Do you understand what’s happening to me?” Our text says He knows what we think before we think it, what we’re going to do before we do it, what we’re going to say before we say it.

How many times have we had to alter plans we’ve made, or cancel them because of unforeseen circumstances? The Proverbs teach, “The heart of man plans his way (we make our plans), but the Lord establishes his steps.” (Prov. 16:9) The Holy Spirit had Jeremiah write, “I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.” (Jer. 10:23) And God would say to each of us:

“Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? (That is, God is not merely confined to a specific location). Can a man hide himself in secret places so that so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord.” (Jer. 23:23,24).

God is always there for His children . Not just in the present - but in our tomorrow’s; our seconds and days and years. He’s with us everywhere in every moment. We are **hemmed in**, and that’s a good thing. The best! He’s moving us in a specific direction for specific purposes; that we may glorify Him here and be prepared for our eternal homecoming!

## III. Too High to Attain.

Again, all this poses a multitude of questions; a multitude of “Why does God let...”; “Why doesn’t God do...”; “Why...why...why?” Martin Luther wrote;

“Wherever God hides Himself, and wills to be unknown to us, there we have no concern ... God in His own nature and majesty is to be left alone; in this regard, we have nothing to do with Him, nor does He wish us to deal with Him. We have to do with Him as clothed and displayed in His Word.... We must keep in view His Word and leave alone His inscrutable will; for it is by His Word, and not by His inscrutable will, that we must be guided...” (Martin Luther, THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL, by J. I Packer and O. R. Johnston, M.A. Fleming H. Revell Company, 1957, p. 170f.)

The Scriptures are very clear about Luther’s understanding. Paul writes, “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” (Rom. 11:33) That brings us to another scene of amazement! How much time and effort do we spend trying to figure out why God does what He does, or why He doesn’t do what we think He should? God has never been and never will be subject to our thinking. And so, Paul writes, “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” (Rom. 11:34) And the answer is simple: No-one! Ever! And then, Paul writes, “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” Another piece of amazement. “I’ve been a fairly good person and did this or that for others. Doesn’t God owe me?” Never! But in Christ He forgives our vile and hell imprisoning sin and grants us eternal life! He gives us everything for life and salvation.

With all this before us, we can say with David the sixth verse of Psalm 139: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it." How significant that in that same Psalm the Holy Spirit had David write (and the words include us), "...in your book were written every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." (v16) How significant, then, are the words of Jesus:

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul (that is, man). Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell (that's God). Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from (the will) of your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. (Matt. 10:28-31)

What a blessing! What comfort! Even in the midst of the greatest isolation from others, the Living God is there. He is there in our sad moments, our failures, our sorrows, in our guilt and regrets over our sin, in our joys, in our living and dying and death and forever.

As God promised Joshua regarding his enemies and struggles so He has promised us: "Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them (let's say anyone or anything), for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you." (Deut. 31:6)

*He Is Always There!*

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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## **“He Is Always There”**

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- II. Hemmed In
- III. Too High to Attain

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