

8th Sunday after Pentecost 2023 Psalm 139. Lord you have searched me.

It can be easy to read the Old Testament and think that there are somehow two Gods; the Old Testament God of judgement who suddenly changes his spots and becomes the God of Love in the New Testament.

This is not so, God is same yesterday, today, and forever, and today's Psalm (from the Old Testament) is one of the great "love" passages of all the bible. Part of the nature of our Rock of Ages, who doesn't change is to be all all-present (omnipresent), all-knowing (omniscient), and all-powerful (omnipotent).

Now if we believe in this false view of the God in the Old Testament, we could think that this is horrible; that we worship a God who knows everything I do, everywhere I go, and is so powerful rocks melt like wax in his presence. He will know what I'm really like and not want me for the kingdom.

But in our beautiful Psalm 139, King David understands that the very nature of God is one of absolute and true love and there is not even the tiniest detail of our lives that isn't really important to him. David rejoices in the fact that God sees, knows, and is over, all.

He is speaking of his own experience of God, not Israel as a nation's. He says 'me' and not 'us.' So today I want you to know how God sees you – just as he saw and still sees King David.

Firstly, God is really interested in us. The Psalm begins "O Lord, you have searched me out and known me." The word translated as "searched," comes from the Hebrew word, (*chaqar* for those interested) which means to examine intimately and primarily used in reference to the act of digging and boring in, as when a person is looking for precious metals and water.

God has mined us down to the tiniest detail of our existence. God finds us fascinating and this constant searching out of us is the way he graciously teaches us about ourselves.

Which is the second point. God knows everything about us. Because God supernaturally searches us, then it follows that he literally knows everything about us. Nothing escapes his attention. He knows us from the tiniest to the biggest details of our lives.

He not only knows what I am doing (whether I sit or stand), but has discerned the path I am on and the direction I am heading and the places I rest. God not only knows your thoughts, but he comprehends them. God understands you! He is acquainted with all of your ways. Every single one of them!

There is not a word on our tongue that the Lord doesn't know completely and utterly. In all things, God knows the heart of it, so God knows the *intent* of our words. What the ear can't comprehend, God fully understands.

Now one of the reasons the Old Testament described David as a "man after God's own heart" is that he was quick to admit his failings and repent before God. So David is pondering these things, that God knows everything he does and participates in it. God knows everything David thinks and says and is before David even has the thought in his head or the word on his tongue.

This is wonderfully liberating. I don't have to explain to God what is going on in my life – he knows! David writes that he is hedged in by God from behind and in front – God had circled the wagons around David who jubilantly says "such knowledge is too wonderful for me: so high that I cannot endure it!"

I can't endure it! It is too pure, too good!

Which brings us to the third point. God is present everywhere, there is no place where God is not.

Where shall I go from your spirit:
or where shall I flee from your presence?

If I ascend into heaven you are there:
if I make my bed in the grave you are there also.

If I spread out my wings towards the morning:
or 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 will cover me:
and the night will enclose me',

The darkness is no darkness with you,
but the night is as clear as the day:
the darkness and the light are both alike.

The bible has quite a few characters who try to run from God – Jonah is probably the best known. It is impossible, as Jonah found out, to flee from God's presence. Whether we are in a church or a gambling den, God is encompassing us.

Whether we are busy working, sleeping, praying, chatting, gardening, shopping, driving or playing with our grandchildren, God hedges us in and surrounds us.

It is very easy to subconsciously run from God by trying to ignore him, or put him into an hour-on-a-Sunday sort of box. David is saying that that won't do either. Surely if I ignore him he will lose interest in me, and the darkness will cover me, and the night enclose me.

But still no! With God even the night is as clear as the day.

Now here is the thing. Having said all that, if you don't want to be with God he doesn't force himself on us. But never think that he is more than a hair's breadth away.

Even if you decide you don't believe in him, he will never stop believing in you. He will still know everything about you; all you have done and are going to do, say and think, and will still love you with all the power that fires the sun and raised Jesus from the dead.

Which is a good place to make the last point, this Psalm is full of praise before finishing with a prayer:

Search me out, O God, and know my heart:
put me to the proof and know my thoughts.

Look well lest there be any way of wickedness in me:
and lead me in the way that is everlasting.

David wisely saw how poor we are at examining ourselves and without God's help we can fall under the delusion that everything is okay. We might think that we are already good enough, but the truth is, we are not.

So David prayed for God to search him, that he might know David's heart and keep his motivations pure. He specifically asked the Lord who knows all to look well for any wicked root that might be forming, and lead him away from it, to the way that is everlasting.

Our God is interested in every part of our lives and knows every part of our lives. All our glorious joys and all our secret little hurts that we have never told anyone about. He is fully involved in our Lives, constantly with us even in places that seem like hell itself, encompassing us in all we do. Let me pray ...