

JOHNS CREEK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

God Knows

Sunday, March 3, 2019

Rev. Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Psalm 139: 1-18

A friend of mine once had lunch with the late Billy Graham. He used the opportunity to ask Graham a question about preaching. He said “Dr. Graham, you have preached all over world to millions of people. And when you preach you seem confident that you are preaching the very word of God. But how do you know it is really God’s word and not just your own idea?” He didn’t hesitate when he answered, “Oh, it is one person there, twenty people there, many people there, but when at least one person there no longer hears my voice but hears the other voice speaking.”

Ever heard a sermon where you heard the other voice, God’s voice, speaking to you? I tell my preaching students that this is the goal of preaching – to become so prepared as vessels of God that listeners no longer hear our voice, but the other voice speaking. Obviously, some sermons are better than others, but this should be the goal.

Today I hope you hear the other voice speaking to you as we take a closer look at one of my favorite Psalms. Psalm 139 has been a great source of comfort and guidance to me throughout my life. My wish is that it will comfort and guide you as well.

God Knows Your Name

After reading verses 1-4 of Psalm 139 it is clear that God understands us intimately. God knows our name.

I remember walking through Phipps Plaza with Brandy many years ago. We were in a department store when we encountered a three year old named Kathy who was lost. She was bawling her eyes out, crying for her “Mommy.” It tore our hearts out. I tried to calm her down and she cried all the more. Thankfully, after a couple of minutes we heard from a distance, “Kathy! Kathy! Kathy!” Her mom was frantically calling out her name, searching for her. When Kathy heard her name

being called, her tears dried up, a smile emerged and she began to run to the sound of her name being called. Right there in that department store I saw the gospel lived out. The lost was found. And I experienced the penetrating power of someone who loves you calling your name.

Mary Magdalene understood the power of your name being called. When she visited the tomb of Jesus to honor and remember what Jesus did for her, she discovered the body was gone. She ran into who she thought was a gardener. It was dawn and difficult for her to see that it was Jesus. But then Jesus called her name: “Mary, Mary.” And she rejoiced – The sound of your name being called by someone who loves you.

There are days when I am comforted by the fact that God knows my name. He knows me intimately and understands me. There are times when I need to remember this. I feel lost, misunderstood or lonely, and I wonder if anyone really gets me. Then I turn to this Psalm and realize again that God knows me, loves me, and gets me.

I love the Upper Room devotional. I try to read it every day. The messages are simple, but inspiring. A few years back there was a touching devotional written by Louise Kilpatrick. Louise described herself as a 30-year-old widow and mother of two boys ages 2 and 5. She writes, “My five-year-old wanted to go play at the park. My soul was aching from having lost my husband 3 months ago, but reluctantly I said, ‘Ok, let’s go.’ As we walked in the park we paused by a beautiful, blooming bush. After a while, Terry looked up at me and said, ‘Momma, don’t worry. We’ll be happy again someday.’ As he squeezed my hand I realized his words were true. In my sorrow I had forgotten God. It took a child to remind me that God does not abandon his own.”

This is what the old hymn “In the Garden” expresses:

“And He walks with me and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own.
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.”

Are you lonely? You want someone to understand you?
Do you desire connection and love? Let Jesus be your
friend. He cares about you, understands you and knows
your name.

God Knows Your Secrets

Verses 7-10 reveal that God knows our secrets
as well, which isn't always a joy.

There was a code in my house growing up.
Whenever someone important came up the driveway
unexpectedly, whoever saw them was legally, ethically
and morally responsible to shout “Fire Drill!” This
meant we were to run and pick up clothes, dirty dishes,
trash and various other items around the house and
throw them in a back room and shut and lock the door.
Then the doorbell would ring and we would say, “Oh
surprise! Come in and see us as we really are!”

Many times we will do that to God. We will tell
God that we love him and appreciate all that he does for
us. But we ask that he not enter our room of shame,
secrets and sin. So we lock the door and we don't let
God in. We won't allow God to free us from our
burdens.

But we forget that God knows we have the
room, and he knows what we have in there. Beyond that,
he doesn't want to give us more shame, regret or pain.
Instead, God wants to free us from those things that hold
us back and make us whole.

I always found the question that God asked
Adam in Eden very curious. After the fall, God asked
Adam, “Where are you?” Now why? Why would a God
of supreme knowledge ask a question that God already
knew the answer to? I believe it was because God did
not want to possess, coerce, or punish Adam. Instead,
God was saying, “Adam, I want to be where you are. I
want to love you and redeem you and help you
overcome the sins and secrets in your life.”

Do you feel shame today? Do you feel weighed
down by secrets, sins and shortcomings. Allow God's

love and grace in your life to set you free and make you
whole. God know your secrets and wants to relieve you
of them.

God Knows Your Worth

Verses 15 and 16 of Psalm 139 remind me of
our sacred worth. They remind me that God knows my
worth. I am precious. I am worthy. I am loved. God
created me. Sometimes we forget this, and we allow the
world the put us down.

He was a young man from Kansas City who
liked to draw. He felt God had given him a gift, but
when he applied for cartoonist jobs at various
newspapers he was rejected. The editors suggested that
he give up his dream.

He was devastated but he didn't give up. He
knew his potential and gifts.

It just so happened that he met a pastor who was
looking for someone to draw pictures of church events
for the church newsletter. He was hired for nearly
nothing, but it was a start. The only problem was that he
had no place to live or draw his pictures. The pastor
offered him a garage near the church that had a couch
and a few chairs. He took it.

One night as he was laying on that old couch he
felt discouraged. He saw a little mouse run across the
floor and thought he would draw it. He did. You know
what? Later that mouse became very famous. His name
was Mickey Mouse. The artist? Walt Disney.

Walt was rejected over and over again but he
chose to believe in his gifts. He chose to embrace his
worth and not give up.

What about you? Are you embracing your worth
in God or do you listen to critics who try to put you
down? Critics are everywhere. The easiest thing to do in
the world is to become a critic of others. Weak and
insecure people like to be critics. It makes them feel
better. But I have learned that no one ever did anything
significant listening to critics.

Listen to God and what he says about you. He
created you and loves you. He gave you gifts and
wondrous qualities. You are “fearfully and wonderfully
made.”

God Knows You Are His Child

Verses 13-14 and 17-18 sum up the power of Psalm 139. They remind us we are God's children. This is something else we forget. This is one of the reasons we worship God every week – to be reminded that we are God's children and are loved by him. You are God's child.

My son Paul has learned to say "I love you." He said it to me for the first time the other morning as I was leaving the house. "I wuuuuuv you." I almost collapsed. My heart melted. It reminded me that the most important job I have as a father is making sure that kid knows he is loved. It is only when we experience love that we are able to express it to others. What a different world it would be if more children experienced love. They would grow up to be loving people.

I have discovered that my job as a pastor is not much different than my role as a father. I am here to remind you that you are a child of God and loved by him. If you don't get anything else from this message, it is more than enough.

Karl Barth was probably the greatest theologian of the last 200 years. He had more influence on the modern church than any other theologian. Many years ago he gave his last lecture at the University of Chicago. He was old and feeble by then and was very tired after the lecture. The hosts of the lecture series had planned to have a Q and A but they realized that Barth was just too tired. So there in the lecture hall in front of a host of students and professors, the host said, "Dr. Barth, we know you are tired, so I will ask you just one question on behalf of everyone here: What is the greatest theological discovery you have ever made?" Everyone had pen and paper ready to write down exactly what he said. He turned to the crowd and simply said, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

He does, you know. Our Lord loves you so much. He knows your name, your secrets, and your worth. You are his child. Don't ever forget it.

Questions for discussions and reflection:

What does Psalm 139 mean to you? What themes or messages do you find encouraging?

Do you ever feel misunderstood or ignored? How does your faith help you during those times?

How does it feel to be reminded that you are God's child, that you are created and loved by God? Are there people in your life that need to know this too?

How will you live out the message of this sermon?



11180 Medlock Bridge Road Johns Creek, GA 30097
770-497-8215 www.johnscreekumc.org