

Text: Psalm 139
St Stephen's

Dec 9/10, 2006
Sat/Sun

God is Closer than the Air You Breathe

“What’s God like?” It’s one of the most important questions in life, because it’s hard to trust God until you first know that He’s really there and you know something about Him. Last week Bill talked about the joy of God. You know, I think God is **the most joyous being** in the whole cosmos. Hard to argue with that once you start to think about it.

Today I want to start with a question. **Where is God?** It is actually a big question, and you would be surprised at what we really believe. When we say God is **everywhere**, closer than the air you breathe. We call that his **omnipresence**. An 8 year old named Danny had some comments on God’s omnipresence...

God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere which keeps Him pretty busy. If you don't believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can't go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It is good to know He's around you when you're scared in the dark or when you can't swim and you get thrown into real deep water by big kids.

God is closer than the air you breathe, and Danny thought it was good news!

Take out your Bibles... Psalm 139

The Measure of God’s Presence

- **VV 1-6 His Knowledge Is Overwhelming**

*O Lord, you have searched me
and you know me.*

- **VV 7-12 His Company Is Inescapable**

*Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?*

- **VV 13-18 His Power Is Unbounded**

For you created my inmost being;

*you knit me together in my mother's womb.
All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.*

- **VV 19-24 His Justice Is Unalterable**

If only you would slay the wicked, O God!

What do you do when God is closer than the air you breathe?

2 Responses:

1) His Presence Makes Me Afraid

Do you sense it in his words?

Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

David senses that if this holy God knows him, is always there looking with holy eyes, and knows him to the bottom of who he is, he has a great deal to fear. So David cries, "Where can I escape...?" He hides.

*If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are
there.*

*If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.*

*If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"*

Ps 139:7-11 (NIV)

I cannot bear your presence if you know all about me.

Why? Because David knows that God can see his **brokenness**, his pettiness, his rebellion, his obsession with himself. He is filled with **shame**, in David's language, "I am hemmed in", constrained, traumatized – he feels is **naked before God**.

He fears that if he is in the presence of the God who knows all about him, who looks at him with holy eyes, God will **destroy him – not bless him**. So he wants to get away...

But there is **another fear** that lurks in David's heart.

If he fears being known, but he also **fears being forgotten**.

We don't want to be known. But we don't want to be unknown.

What's behind all this? I think it comes down to this: **We want to be loved**. We want to be loved **for who we really are**. But we know if people knew who we **really** are, we wouldn't be loved. So we are afraid. But if we are **not known at all**, we wouldn't be loved. And we are afraid of that, too.

If people get close to me and **see down to the depths** of my heart, they would find all kinds of things that would repel them. But if people **never see me at all** – that leaves me out there all on my own, and I can't stand that either.

This explains all kinds of **maddening things** we do...

We **risk love**, wanting to be known,

And we **run from love**, to keep from being known.

When I was a teenager, I would go to a dance, hoping to meet a girl
But I would never ask anyone to dance, afraid to meet a girl.

We join a small group... wanting new friends

And we refuse to be honest... fearing new friends

We **want to commit** but we are afraid to be known, so
we **run from commitment**, blowing up the very relationships that
offer us the hope of that real love we seek.

So...

We want to be known - because we want to be loved.

But we afraid to be really known - because we want to be loved, and
we are afraid being really known will kill love.

There we are, **frozen between two fears**: between the fear of being known and the fear of being ignored. Living behind our masks, desperately searching for the love we need – and paralyzed by fear. This is the essence of **the human predicament**.

Is there any way out? David shows it to us.

2) His Presence Gives Me Hope

*If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.*

Ps 139:8-10

8-10 *you are there*. **To do what?** To examine me? To judge me? To condemn me? Most people assume that if God has all the information on my life that **he would do with it what we would do with it**. Criticize. Judge. Control. Condemn.

But NOT so... *"You hold me, lead me"*

Something has happened to David. You see the hint of it here.

Ps 139:17-18

*How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand.
When I awake,
I am still with you.*

17-18 how **precious** are **your thoughts**.

In the beginning of the psalm (vv 1-4) David is aware that God is looking into his heart, and is **reading David's own thoughts to the**

bottom. But now in vs 17 David turns from **what is inside him** to **what is inside God** ... and he finds something astounding, unexpected, “precious” “how *precious* are *your thoughts*”

Because David has become convinced that God’s thoughts towards him are thoughts of grace, not judgment, and that God is **FOR him, not against him.**

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jer 29:11

Being known by this God **takes away his fears**, settles his heart. Grace does that. You say, “Precious are **your thoughts**” towards me. About me. Greater than all the wealth of the earth is **your plan** for me.

This is like **knowing you have cancer**, and you are afraid of the news from the doctor, so you avoid him – then you find out this Dr can heal every disease, and you find out he knows all about you already, and you find out he has already prepared a plan of healing for you, and he cares for you, and he actually **loves you**. He will do all the heavy lifting.

What’s your reaction? You don’t run any more. You don’t hide. You get into his office, fast. You want him to know you all the way down, because you know God is good and gracious and near –hiding doesn’t make any sense. Look how David says it...

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Psa 139:23-24

David knows he is **safe**. God knows him to the bottom and loves him to the bottom. Actually David was just **skimming the surface** of the preciousness of God’s thoughts towards him, because it turns out God

knows him to the bottom and **loves him all the way to Bethlehem... all the way to the cross...**

This is why **people flocked to Jesus**, because they sensed that although he knew them, and knew them to the bottom, he loved them, and would love them to the heavens. No matter how broken. That is **grace-love**. And it is **precious**.

He has precious thoughts towards you. He knows you all the way down. All the way. And he loves you. Just like you are. And his plans for you are astounding, large, healing. Perfect.

The next time you find yourself anxious that God is as close as the air you breath, look again at his heart, his thoughts towards you, remind yourself of his plan. Look at the cross. Say, precious are your thoughts towards me. And **don't run from him. Run to him.**