

Date: 25/5.08  
Text: Psalm 139  
Place: Kingscliff, Tweed Heads AM/PM  
Title:  
File: Psalm 139

One of my favourite records when I was in my late teens was the soundtrack to the radio series called War of the Worlds. This soundtrack was an adaptation of HG Wells classic novel of the same name and it started with these haunting words from Richard Burton.

*“No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinised and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. “*

*No one would have believed that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man. Well how true are those words. We are being watched by one who is so much greater than we. But not by alien beings ready to come and conquer, not by a heavenly being who in Bette Midler's words is watching us from a distance. But by an all knowing, all seeing, all powerful and all holy Heavenly Father.*

Yes most of us carry on life toing and froing in complacency, unaware that everything we do is being watched. But Psalm 139 challenges us to stop and think about our God. To ponder what he sees us do. And to respond by reordering our lives so that not only are we found doing the very things that God would want us to do; and thinking the thoughts that would bring him glory and honour; but also living a life that will take us past this life to the way everlasting.

### **1. The All Knowing God. (verses 1 to 6)**

So let us turn to this Psalm, for the first thing we read about here, in the first 6 verses is an all knowing God. A God who searches us and knows us. A God who knows when you sit and rise, who knows your thoughts, your ways, your words. A God who surrounds us and a God who lays his hands upon us.

Wow. Nothing escapes God's notice. Whereas I can put on an appearance and hide many things from you, my kids now and certainly in the future will be able to see through that outward appearance. Whereas I can keep some things hidden from Samuel, Jemma and Joshua because of their age and inexperience, I know that many of those things are extremely obvious to my wife Kaylene, who knows me even better. But I can still hide things from her but this Psalm reminds me I can't hide things from God.

Somehow, even though there are some 6 billion people in the world. He knows not just about my outward actions, what I do, he knows my thoughts as well, why I do those things. It is said that we have over 10,000 thoughts a day but God knows them all. But he knows more than just my thoughts, he can peel away my insecurities and

confidences and truly know the real me, the core of whom I am, a knowledge that even I struggle at times to comprehend.

God then is the supreme psychologist. When you have a problem, you don't have to lie down on the psychiatrist's couch and tell him everything. Get down on your knees instead and talk to Jesus and tell Him everything. You might as well tell Him because He knows all about you anyway. The psychiatrist still won't know you even after you have told him everything you can think of. But God will before a word is even on your lips.

Now in some ways this is scary, very scary. I remember reading the novel 1984 by George Orwell about Big Brother watching you and how you can't escape its all knowing presence. But what made that novel scary was that Big Brother wanted to control you, contain you, mould you into its sinister plans.

But God is no Big Brother figure, no he is our loving heavenly father. He made us. He loves us. He wants the best for us. He doesn't want to squeeze the life out of us in order that he can remain in control. He made us to give us life and life to the full. And it is this God who knows all about our lives, from top to bottom, from outward to inward.

So how do we react to this sort of knowledge? Well David says in verse 6, "This knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty to obtain." He acknowledges God's greatness and says really it blows my brain, it is beyond my comprehension, its awesome. He really does know everything about you.

But do you know Him? Do you know what God is like? Do you know what His character is like? Do you understand His make up, three but one? Have you pondered His dealings with His people, have you studied his fingerprints in creation, are you aware of His promises to His world? Do you know about God?

If you were to pick up the Westminster Confession of Faith, the basis of what we in the Presbyterian Church believe about God, you would read this paragraph. "*There is but one only, living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute; most loving, gracious, merciful, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him and yet most just and terrible in His judgements, hating all sin and who will by no means clear the guilty.*" Well despite that being a mouthful if we were to study those words and traced up the Scriptures where they come from that would help us to know more about who God is.

But we don't want to just know more about God, we want to know God. We want to interact with Him. And so if he knows us intimately, then it helps us to honest with Him, to trust Him, to love Him, to be passionate about Him. He is all knowing and yet he wants us to know Him, to love Him, to follow Him. And yet the Psalm continues

**2. Not just all knowing, but all present.**

For there is no where in the world that we can go that will escape God's presence. If David was to go up in to the heavens, God would be there. If he goes to the world of the dead, God is there, if he goes to the dawn, to the east or if he goes across the sea, to the west, even then he can't escape. Remember Jonah found that one out. Even the darkness could not hide David from God's presence. God is everywhere!

He is omnipresent. "The Lord our God is everywhere at once." Author, Paul Little states that "God is not a substance spread out in a thin layer all over the earth - all of Him is in Chicago, in Calcutta, in Cairo, and in Caracas, at once and the same time."

So there is no where you can go to escape God. He's there at work. He's there in prison. He there on your overseas trip. He's there in the lounge room as you watch the TV. God is ever present, whether we believe it or not. In the early days of space travel, one of the Russian cosmonauts returned from orbiting the earth and announced that when he had looked out of his space capsule he had not seen God anywhere. To which someone replied, "If he had taken off his space suit for just one second, he would have seen God pretty quickly!"

Now this is an amazing doctrine to ponder. I remember when I was a young man, I backpacked around Europe for 3 months and before I set off I wrote to my parents and to my friends and I gave them four PO addresses in four cities that I was going to visit. I wasn't sure how long I would stay in this place or at this country, but that would be my four fixed points on my rather loose itinerary.

But I remember having some real difficulties getting hold of my money in Greece. And I spent a night or two on a park bench, with little food, no company and I remember thinking to myself, no one in the whole world knows where I am right now. And if someone were to knock me off and take my wallet and back pack, there would almost be no way to work out who I am.

But that was not entirely correct. No one knew where I was, except God. He knew what was happening. He had my itinerary always before Him. Now in those circumstances that was incredible comforting. I really don't have to be ever alone, because I can always talk to Him and I can always be in his presence.

But God being ever present, should also motivate me to live as if he is watching me. I know that if I'm driving along the highway and I see that police car is behind, that motivates me not to speed. You know that if the boss is watching what you are doing on your computer, you won't waste your time playing solitaire or grand theft auto. And so if I know that God is in my presence, it should make me re think how I speak to my kids, how I treat that stranger, how I react to that harsh word, how I cope with that problem at work.

Knowing that God is ever present, should not make me want to escape from his presence but instead enjoy his presence. You might have read Brother Lawrence's book called, "Practicing the Presence of God." For 15 years, his responsibility was to wash the greasy pots and pans in the monastery - a job he greatly disliked. Practicing the presence of God transformed what he considered a chore into an exciting privilege. This is what he writes: "My day-to-day life consists of giving God my simple, loving attention. If I'm distracted, He calls me back in tones that are

supernaturally beautiful. The most holy and necessary practice in our spiritual life is the presence of God. That means finding constant pleasure in His divine company, speaking humbly and lovingly with Him in all seasons, at every moment, without limiting the conversation in any way.”

### 3. God is all knowing, all seeing and thirdly **All Powerful**.

Because he was the one who created us. He knit us together in our mother’s womb. Yes I know your parents had something to do with how your life began, but when you think about it, they might have started the ball rolling, but they had little or no control over how that one single cell, becomes a complex human being. And we are a complex human being.

Did you know for example that 50,000 of the cells in your body will die and be replaced with new cells; all while you have been listening to this sentence! Did you know that in one hour, your heart works hard enough to produce the equivalent energy to raise almost 1 ton of weight 1 yard off the ground. That in 1 square inch of skin there lies 4 yards of nerve fibres, 1300 nerve cells, 100 sweat glands, 3 million cells, and 3 yards of blood vessels. That in a year, a person's heart beats 40,000,000 times. And that your stomach has to produce a new layer of mucus every two weeks otherwise it will digest itself.

Amazing, isn't it? What a wonder you are! I love this quote from St. Augustine, "People travel to wonder at the height of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long course of rivers, and they pass by themselves without wondering."

We truly are fearfully and wonderfully made. We were woven together by an amazing God, in our mother’s wombs. Even before we had a relationship with our mothers, God was watching our unformed bodies. He was working with his hands in our lives. So we have value to God not because of what we do in this life. We have value to God because of whom we are, God’s child, God’s handiwork, God’s creature.

Now if I was to open my wallet and take out a \$20 note and offer it to you with no strings attached, I’m sure most of you would take it. Even if I was to tear it or squash it up, to stamp on it. It still retains its value. Its valuable because the Australia government says that it is worth \$20.

And yet we are so much more valuable than a piece of currency. And so whether we are crumbled, crushed, frayed around the edges, dirty, tired, old, it doesn’t matter. Our value is not in our outward appearances, our value is in what God says about us. And we are his children. We are his creation. We are have a soul that will last forever.

God is all powerful and he has put his time, his effort, his image into you and me. Why when we went astray, he even sent his one and only son into the world so that He might die and so that we might live. That’s where your value is. Not in your job, in your family, in your looks, in your actions. No your value comes from what God has given you. Life. Love. Hope. Faith, Joy, Peace. But are those the things you value in life? Do you ponder what God has done for you? Do you count the fact that you are always in His thoughts? Do you reflect on what he has done to secure your salvation, to fix up his relationship with you, to go over and above the call of duty

with you. Do you value that God who is all knowing, all present, all powerful would bother to bring you to life and then offer you eternal life?

#### **4. Especially when he is all holy as well.**

And you see that in the last 6 verses, verses 19 to 24. For the tone for the Psalm changes somewhat. David starts pondering God's justice and wonders why don't you get rid of the wicked God? Haven't you notices there are people, stacks of people out there with evil intent. Don't you register Lord that some people hate you, ignore you, despise you? After all you are a great God, a God of justice.

But the moment David gets carried away with his thoughts. The moment he mounts his high horse and is quick to defend God's honour, he stops himself. Oh, Lord, but am I really no different? So search me O Lord and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and get rid of them and so you can now lead me to the way everlasting.

If God is all knowing, ever present, all powerful, always holy, all of us are in trouble, big, big trouble. For yes he sees what those corrupt politicians do, how those big businessmen trample on others, he sees those harassed parents not treating their kids properly and he knows the physical, mental and emotional abuse that is going on in this world. But he sees *our* weaknesses as well, *your weakness and mine*. He must shake his head at our thoughts, at our selfishness, at our sin. He is a holy God and we are unholy people. So we need Him to search our souls, test our hearts, perceive our thoughts, cleanse our sin and lead us to the way everlasting.

For that is the sort of prayer that God loves to answer. He doesn't just want to heal Uncle Jim's prostrate and keep Auntie Maude safe on her holidays. He wants to change the direction of our lives, he wants to chip away at our bad character traits, he wants to heal our emotional scars and he wants us to live the life that he put us together for.

That's what he wants us to do. But is that what we want to do as well? Do we want him to search us and know us or do we want to hide for Him? Do we want to enjoy the presence of our God or do we want to run away and live our own lives? Do we want marvel at the way he has been deeply involved in our lives from conception or do we want to live independently of our creator? And do we want to get God to clean up our lives or do we try and clean it up ourselves?

There is this wonderful tract that I read many years ago called My House, Christ's Home. And it is about a man who invites Jesus into his house, into his life. And so he invites him into the kitchen and that means that he has to better watch what he is putting into his body . He encourages him to browse in his study, but that means many of the books and the magazines he enjoys has to go because they would offend his new housemate.

Having Jesus in his bedroom affects what he does with his girl friend. Having Jesus in his workshop makes him ponder what he is building with his life. Having Jesus in the TV room affects what he watches on the box. But throughout the tract, this man has some secrets that he keeps in the closet that he doesn't want Jesus to know about.

And after a while Jesus talks about the stench that is coming from the parts of the house that closed off to him.

And eventually this man realises that he can't clean up his own act, Jesus has to come and do it for him. And so rather than hide things from Jesus, he asks for his help and that makes all the difference. Similarly if Jesus is in our life, if he is our Lord and Saviour, we shouldn't be hiding things from him, but instead we should be asking for his help to change our ways and his guidance so that we can be lead in the way everlasting. That is what this Psalm is all about. And that is the sort of prayer that God would like all of us to pray, no matter where we are with him right now.

Toward the end of his book Things Hidden, Richard Rohr tells a story of two parents bringing home a newly-born baby. Their four-year-old daughter insists on speaking to her new sibling--alone, all alone. The amused parents leave, but stand at the doorway for easy eavesdropping. Their daughter gets close to the infant and urgently whispers: "Quick! Tell me where we came from and why we're here. I'm beginning to forget!"

Well Psalm 139 has been a reminder. We are come from the hands of an all knowing, all seeing, all powerful and all holy God. And we are here to ponder Him, enjoy His presence, be cleansed by Him and allow him to lead us to the way everlasting. So is that what we are doing with our lives right now? And if not what do we have to do change them?