

## REFLECTION

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### Psalm 139: 1-12, 23-24

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 far away.  
You search out my path and my lying down,  
and are acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before a word is on my tongue,  
O LORD, you know it completely.  
You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is so high that I cannot attain it.  
Where can I go from your spirit?  
Or where can I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;  
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.  
If I take the wings of the morning  
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,  
Even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me fast.  
Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my thoughts.  
See if there is any wicked way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.

This Psalm of David, using some of the most beautifully crafted language in the Psalms, emphasizes the omniscience, omnipresence, and omni-everything of God. In other words, it reminds us that God is everywhere and knows all things. Upon hearing David's words, I am compelled to consider this notion that God is not confined to heaven, but is closely observing the details of David's life, becoming "acquainted with all his ways." And not only that, God even knows the thoughts in his mind before they ever make it to his tongue. It asserts that the Creator knows what we are doing, what we are thinking, and suggests that he knows us even better than we know ourselves.

If you are the type of person who fears being watched, or made vulnerable through complete and total exposure, this is probably not your preferred Psalm. It can be disconcerting to know that the Alpha and the Omega, the all-powerful and all-mighty knows what you're thinking when you've been on hold with Verizon wireless for 20 minutes.

And yet, there is a part of this Psalm that has been left out of the reading for today, and I can understand why. It's not exactly family-friendly, reading about how David really dislikes God's enemies and would prefer that God destroy them at once.

And yet, perhaps there is a sense of authenticity in this raw emotion David expresses... if God knows everything there is to know about us, including the way we feel during our worst

moments, why try to hide it? Maybe it's a call to be real with God, air our dirty laundry, expose our imperfections, so that we can more easily lay them aside, and move past them to where the good stuff lies.

David goes on to say, "If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol (or hell), you are there. God is with us in heaven and in hell. Even in hell. Maybe especially in hell. The hell of physical pain, broken relationships, starvation, addiction, life, death.

This same vulnerability that we might feel under the roving eye of God, may be like what I experienced when I first met my newborn son, or sat by the bedside of my grandmother, who was waiting to pass from this life to the next. My experience during these moments that render us "naked", is that we become acutely aware of the nearness and the fullness of God. At the tenuous beginning and end of existence, the Great Spirit is with us.

And perhaps, under the watchfulness of an active God, we can find great comfort in knowing that we are loved enough to be on God's radar. And not only was God watching and caring for David, but in the intimate style of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, God interacts with him, and like a shepherd, hems him in behind and before, lays his hand upon him, leads him, and holds him fast with his right hand.

Many of you know that John and I formally adopted our son William this past month. The road to this adoption has been paved with the presence of God, God as described in Psalm 139. I am still in wonderment about the whole thing. I am the type of person who wavers in the face of big commitment, knowing that if I begin something, I am not likely to back out. At times, I will shy away from a perfectly good thing because I am not absolutely sure if it is the right path for me. All I can figure is that perhaps God, in knowing this about me, showed us multiple signs that this baby was indeed for us.

Our desire was to find a child of Asian descent in the diverse state of West Virginia, even though our social worker suggested that this wasn't a possibility. It turns out, we were chosen to be William's parents because William's birth father is half-Korean.

In addition, William was born exactly one week after my birthday and one week before John's. We hemmed him in behind and before.

10 minutes before the phone call came from our social worker, telling us that John and I had been selected as William's adoptive parents and asking would we like to adopt him, my family was eating at a Chinese & Korean buffet. My mom opened a fortune cookie that said, and I kid you not, "accept the next proposal you receive."

Wow, does the Almighty God commune through Chinese fortune cookies? Did a message come from a fortune cookie as part of the Asian theme?

The list of signs goes on, but the conclusion in my mind is clear. God was making himself apparent to us during these times, or maybe God has been there all along, and I have really begun to notice.

### **In closing**

As one online commentary on Psalm 139 suggests, this Psalm is the Bible's version of an anti-depressant. I would add to that statement, that it is also a source of great joy and consolation, to know that we are never alone and are surrounded by the love of God. May God abide.