

When I'm feeling hurt Psalm 139 is one of my favourite go to places in the bible. I find it helps me regain perspective, no matter how upset up I feel. I think this is because the words of the Psalm remind me of God's character, what He is like, who He is, whilst at the same time reminding me who I am. It tells me what God thinks of me, that I'm "fearfully and wonderfully made" even when I'm feeling rubbish. I find I need to come back to what really matters. What really matters is not what my husband or my sister or my friend, think of me, but what God thinks of me because my eternal destiny is in God's hands, no one else's.

The last 2 verses, which were also the last 2 verses Michael read to us, are often used as a prayer. It's a challenging prayer too!

"Search me, 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."

Sadly, I often have anxious thoughts and I think the term "offensive way" means "sinful way" and yes I'm prone to sin too!

But in this prayer we are asking to be tested. Do we really want to be tested? Jon talked of being tested, when he shared the story of God asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Do we really want to risk opening ourselves up to such close examination? Can I cope with this level of vulnerability? What might God ask me to do? Is there a bit of me that I would rather keep hidden away from God and everyone else? There's the friendly, bright, pleasant Jane that I want to present to the world. But what about the rest of me?

I still think it's a marvellous psalm despite the tough prayer at the end. It's full of truth and wonderful promises. This psalm is personal. It applies to you and me. Telling us that God made us, how much God values us, that He is always with us. Wherever I go "your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast." Firm and secure. There is nowhere we can go, physically or emotionally, where God isn't there. We are told His thoughts of us outnumber the grains of sand! Imagine that, it's hard to imagine how many grains of sand there are in a cup, never mind a whole beach.

We have trouble with the enormity of these jaw dropping truths. My logic kicks in and says how is this possible? If God is busy helping the Doctors and nurses, the teachers, the persecuted, and everyone else, how is He thinking of me too? Our problem is we are limited in time and space, but God isn't! He sustains the whole universe. Can we suspend logic and enter the mystery of God who can love each of us with the intensity as if we were the only one? So much of our life is either/or where God's kingdom is concerned it's both/and.

As the Psalm says at the beginning God knows us, "You are familiar with all my ways". He knows us through and through, He knows us intimately, we can't hide anything from our Heavenly Father. This could sound really scary but I find it comforting. To know that the all seeing, all knowing God loves us and accepts us, just as we are. He knows all our failures, our mistakes and still loves us, loves us with a passion we find very hard to grasp. Is this Psalm all about God's invitation to deeper intimacy with Him?

How reluctant we are to respond!

However we see evidence of God's response to us throughout the gospels. Jesus meets with lepers, prostitutes, Roman centurions, he welcomes and accepts anyone who approaches Him. But Jesus doesn't want to leave the people the way He found them. He always invites change. We have the choice to accept or decline the invitation. So maybe this is what the prayer at the end of Psalm 139 is, our opportunity to say yes to God and open ourselves up to the change He wants to bring about in our lives. We don't need to worry about what this change will be. It may be challenging but it will always be for the good, enabling us to love more.

I have a friend who God has worked through mightily. When I was asking him about this, his reply was "Its an adventure really. We just open ourselves to God and see what happens! "

So how about it? Shall we take a further step on our adventure with God? Would you like to join me in praying the prayer at the end of Psalm 139?

Let us pray:

Dear Heavenly Father

May we find comfort in knowing how deeply you care for us and that you are always thinking of us no matter what we are going through.

Please have mercy on us when we disregard you, think we control life, and don't recognise your invitation to enter further into the life you desire for us to experience.

Help us to open ourselves completely to you, knowing that you already know us and accept us. Enable us, hesitant as we are, to take another step on the adventure of following you by praying together

"Search me, 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."

To the praise and honour of the name of Jesus
Amen.