

“Trusting One Who Knows Me”

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First Presbyterian Church Kingwood

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This morning, we're finishing up a three month summer journey through the Book of Psalms. It's been a journey of discovery for many of us; not because we haven't read the Psalms before, but because we've never read them as conversation starters.

But in fact, as we've found out that's exactly what they are.

The Psalms are prayers we can use to start a conversation with God. David used the Psalms that way. Jesus Christ, the Son of David did too. And for the last three months we've been learning how to imitate them; how do more than just to read the Psalms. We've been learning how to pray them.

And as we've done that, the Psalms have really opened up for us, haven't they? They've become much more meaningful. They've given us words to use. They've given us a voice. They've opened up possibilities for conversation with God at more times and places in our lives than we had considered before.

You see most of us probably didn't consider the possibility of starting a conversation with God while looking at the stars until we discovered David doing that in his prayer in Psalm 8. We probably wouldn't have looked at "whining" as a way to start talking to God until we saw how it happened in Psalm 102. And we probably wouldn't have thought of letting our fears function as calls to worship a "big Bubba of a God" until we read Psalm 27.

But now that we have, now that we've seen how the Psalms are meant to work, here's what we need to understand. All through this summer God's been speaking to us. All through this summer, God's been inviting us to get closer to Him, to carry on a deeper conversation with Him. All through this summer God's been helping us to learn to use the Psalms to do that.

And this morning God is going to do it again because we're going to learn how to use another Psalm. It's Psalm 139. and I wonder as we listened to it this morning ... did you notice the theme keeps recurring in the first few verses?

Let me go remind you what those verses say. "You have searched me, Lord, and you know me," David says. "You know when I sit and when I rise; you

perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways."

Did you hear it? Did you the experience that David says he keeps having? It's an "aha" experience. It's one of those experiences that once you've had it, you don't forget it. And an experience like that happened once to John Ortberg. I've mentioned his name a couple of times in the last two or three weeks. I've been trying to do that as a way to get you interested in reading his latest book. You see a lot of us are planning to do that this fall in small groups.

And just this week Mary Lee Irwin, our Adult Discipleship Coordinator told me that 17 small groups have formed so far to do just that. They've contacted her to say they're interested in reading and talking about *The Me I Want to Be*. That's the title of the book. It's about learning to see our lives through God's eyes. And there's a discussion and study guide and a DVD that goes along with the book to make reading and talking about it easier. And if you'd like to join a small group to do that, you still can. Just contact Mary Lee and let her know you're interested. She'll get you into a group.

But one of the stories John tells in *The Me I Want to Be* is a story I want you to listen to now. It's a story that comes out of John's experience. And he writes about it like this. "One of the most important moments of my spiritual life," he says, "was when I sat down with a longtime friend and said, 'I don't want to have any secrets with you.'

"Then I told him a lot of things I'd never told him before. I told him a few of the things I was ashamed of. I told him about my jealousies, my cowardice, how I hurt my wife with my anger ... I told him about deceit and regrets in my life that keep me up at night." As I did, he says, of course I felt tremendously "vulnerable." But "much to my surprise, he didn't even look away. And I will never forget his next words" to me.

"John," he said. "I have never loved you more than I love you right now.' The very truth about me that I thought would drive him away became a bond that drew us closer." Then he writes these words. And I invite you to listen to them closely and as you're listening, think about what they could mean for your relationship with God.

"If I keep part of my life secret from you," John writes, "you may tell me you love me. But inside I think that you wouldn't love me if you knew the whole truth about me. I can only receive love from you to the extent that I am known by you."

Now with those words in the front of your mind, listen again to the opening words of Psalm 139. "You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways."

You see folks, I think the opening words of the Psalm come out of a moment in David's life, very much like the moment in John's life. I think they come out of a moment when David decided to open up to God. And he realized, as he did, that God knew it all anyway.

But the experience, knowing that his life was now an "open book" in every way to God; that realization changed David. And it can change you too. For when you realize that you have no more secrets with God, when you realize that God knows every piece of your life, and still wants to be with you, still chooses to love you; when you realize that, everything starts to change because you start talking to God out of that realization. You start trusting in a way that's much more real, much more meaningful, because now you know he knows you like no-one else.

Skye Jethani's "thirty-something." He's the Managing Editor of *Leadership Journal* one of periodicals most read by pastors all across America. But because he's only "thirty-something" he had some explaining to do to his peers. You see he doesn't "twitter."

And if you don't know what "twittering" is, it's just another way to communicate these days. A "twitter" is a short text message of 150 words or less and you send it to your friends as kind of a running commentary on what you're doing and how your day's going. But Skye doesn't "twitter." And here's what he wrote recently to explain why.

"I know I'll get grief for this," he wrote, "but in the 2004 film *Shall We Dance?* one of the characters is speaking to his wife. And he says this. 'We all need a witness to our lives. There are a billion people on this planet ... I mean, what does any one life really mean in the middle of a billion people? But in a marriage, you promise to care about one person. You promise to notice what they do. The good things, the bad things, the terrible things, the mundane things ... all of it, all of the time.'

And when you do that you're really saying, "Your life won't go unnoticed, because I promise to notice it. Your life won't go un-witnessed because I promise to be your witness."

And then Skye stops quoting the movie and starts speaking personally. "We all want our lives to matter," he says, "and we believe they only matter if they're noticed by someone. I wonder if this isn't what fuels a lot of blogs, Facebook, and especially Twitter. We want someone, anyone, to take notice ... to care about our life ... to watch us and by their attention say to us, 'You matter. Your life counts to me.'

And if this is one of the hidden motivations behind Twittering, and I think it is, we're really talking about a spiritual hunger—one that I don't believe can be satisfied online. So maybe the most significant reason I don't Twitter is because I already have a witness. I know my life already counts to someone. Psalm 139 says it best."

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me."

And Skye's right, isn't he? I mean if you know someone cares about you enough to want to witness your whole life. If you know someone cares about you enough to know care about noticing when you sit and when you rise. If you know someone cares about you that much, then you've got to know you can talk to that person. You can tell them anything, because they're really going to listen. They're really going to understand. They're really going to be there for you wherever you are and whatever you're going through.

And that's exactly what David discovered, isn't it? That God was there for him wherever he went in his life. "You hem me in behind and before," he says, "and you lay your hand on me ... Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you're there with me; if I make my bed in the depths, you're there with me. 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."

And I love that last line I just read to you. The line in the Psalm that tells us that God wants to be not only the One who knows us best but the One we can trust to guide us when we find ourselves in a place we don't want to be.

Charlie Steinmetz is a name that most people have probably forgotten by now. But in Charlie Steinmentz had one of the greatest minds in the field of electrical engineering that the world has ever seen. In his day, in the early part of the 20th century, no one knew more about electricity than he did.

Steinmetz built the great electrical generators for Henry Ford's first plant in Dearborn, Michigan. And once the generators were in place and all the wiring was done, the assembly line began to hum. Cars moved down the line like clockwork and profits began to pour into Ford's pockets. Things smoothly for months.

But then, suddenly and without warning, everything ground to a halt. Ford Motor Company went dark. One mechanic after another was unable to locate the problem. And Henry Ford was frustrated. He was losing money. Finally, he got in touch with the brain that had built the system. He asked Steinmetz to come and fix it. And a few days later he showed up and went to work.

He fiddled around with a gauge or two. He tinkered with some settings, pushed a few buttons, messed with some wires. Then he threw the master switch, and lights blinked on, engines began to whirl, and things were back to normal.

A few days later Henry Ford received a bill for \$10,000. And though Ford was a rich man, he couldn't believe it. Paying such a huge sum of money for such a simple piece of work just didn't seem right. So he returned the bill to Steinmetz with a note. "Charlie," he wrote, "isn't this bill just a little high for a few hours of tinkering around with a some wires and switches?"

And Steinmetz rewrote the bill and sent it back to Ford with a note. The note read "For tinkering around on the motors: \$10. For knowing where to tinker: \$9,990. Total \$10,000." And Henry Ford paid the bill.

You see the truth that David discovered was this. God not only wanted to be the witness to his life, and be a part of his life wherever he went. God wanted to "tinker" with his life too. He wanted to guide it. And because God knew his life like no-one else, David was willing, as the Psalm says to let God's hand "guide" him and show him how to make the right move in his life, and "hold him fast" and stop him when he was about to make the wrong one.

So once again this morning, in another Psalm of Trust, God is issuing an invitation to you and me. He's issuing an invitation to us to trust Him; to trust Him enough to open up to Him, to realize that we have no secrets with Him, that he cares about us enough to want to know it all.

He wants to share our life with us. He wants to listen to us talk to him about the good and the bad, the big things and the little things.

And He wants to be with us, to stay in conversation with us, wherever we go, whatever we do in our lives. He wants to be a part of it. He wants us to know he's there.

And He wants to look to Him, to look for His hand reaching out to guide us, to move us forward in life in the direction He wants us to go, or to "hold us fast" and tell us when He knows it would be better for us to stop moving in the direction we've been going.

God's inviting you into that kind of a lifelong conversation, that kind of a lifelong relationship with Him this morning through the words of Psalm 139. And the question is, are you there yet? Are you there yet? If you aren't, you can be. The kind of relationship with God that Psalm 139 describes can be your relationship with God; if you want it to be.

There's a wonderful passage in the book of Jeremiah and it says this. "Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant." And God goes on to explain to Jeremiah that the new covenant will not be like the one He made with Moses or David, it will be different. "No longer," God says, will any person have to say, "Know the Lord." "For they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest."

And I don't know where you feel like you fit on that scale, "from the least of them to the greatest" but I do know this. God wants you to know Him, to know that He cares about you, to know that He wants to be with you, to know that He wants to guide you. And God wants you to be in a lifelong relationship with Him, a lifelong conversation. And it begins this way.

Let's pray ...