No Escape from God

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O LORD, you have searched me and known me. 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. 3 You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. 4 Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely. 5 You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. 7 Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, 10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast." (Psalm 139:1-10)

1. A Puppet Show

How did you like Sharon's puppet show? It was amazing. Wasn't it? Can we give her one more time a round of applause? I am so glad that God's words can be shared not only by preaching, but also through puppetry. If you would like to share your talents in service, please let me know. I love to celebrate our Lord through our gifts and talents on Sundays.

Have you ever thought about the relationship between the puppeteer and the puppets? Do you think that puppets ever complain about their puppeteers or ask for more freedom? Probably not. However, the puppeteer knows exactly how the puppets are doing. The puppeteer has a deep understanding of all the aspects of the puppet. Psalm 139 reminds us of this type of a close relationship that we have with God.

2. The Lord Knows Everything

Psalm 139 is known as one of the most notable of the sacred hymns written by King David. David has come to the sanctuary to present his prayer, hoping for the Lord to vindicate him. He protests his innocence of certain charges brought against him. David believes that God knows every detail of his life and every thought in his head. God knows David inside and out.

Psalm 139:1 says, "***O LORD, you have searched me and known me.***" "To know" in Hebrew "yada" means 'know' through an intimate relationship like between husband and wife. David affirms that his relationship with the Lord is like the relationship of a couple. He believes that God knows absolutely everything about him. God knows when David sits down and when he gets up (v. 2); where David goes and when David sleeps (v. 3).

The opposites of going out in the morning and lying down at night represent a whole day's activities. In verse 4, David says, "***Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely***." Before David frames a word on his tongue, the Lord is thoroughly familiar with what David is about to say. This kind of knowledge is too wonderful for David (v. 6). God's ability to know everything is beyond anything David can comprehend.

In Matthew 10:30, Jesus says to his disciples, "***Even the hairs of your head are all counted***." In this imagery, Jesus means that there is nothing God does not know about us including our weakness and wickedness. Despite all this, God accepts and loves us as we are. Although God knows everything about us, God does not force and control our every action like a puppeteer does with puppets. Our relationship with God has much greater depth.

3. God is Present Always

The thought of such knowledge in verses 1-6 may have prompted David's desire to escape as verses 7-12 tell us. David asks the Lord a rhetorical question in verse 7. "***Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?"*** David confesses that there is no place where David can escape from the presence of the Lord. In verses 8-10, some of the hypothetical places of where David might try to escape are mentioned.

David declares that the Lord is present in the heavens above and in sheol below (v. 8). These opposites signify that all areas in between the sky and the lowest place on earth are also in God's presence. David is convinced that wherever he goes, the hand of the Lord will lead and protect him.

4. Declaration of Independence

We will be celebrating July 4th in three days. The Declaration of independence declared that the 13 American colonies would regard themselves as 13 independent sovereign states and no longer under British rule. The 13 states wanted to be free from British control. This marks the beginning of the formation of the United States. Independence is a core value of our country. But can we be completely independent in our relationship with the Lord?

During the summer, many people go on vacation. We see many of these folks who visit our area during the summer. I've noticed that many times, people who normally go to church, often don't attend Sunday worship when on vacation. There can be a lot of reasons for this. But this experience got me thinking, "can we ever escape from the Lord?" Does God go on vacation? If God is on vacation for one day, we will be in big trouble.

We can miss Sunday worship service, but Psalms 139 reminds us that God knows where we are and what we are doing. Whether we like it or not,

God does not leave us alone. The Lord is always with us. There is no way for us to escape from the presence of the Lord. That does not mean that God always wants to put us under his control.

5. The Best Gift

What do you think is the best gift we receive from God? I believe the best gift God gives us is free will. When God created Adam and Eve, God says, ***"You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; [17] but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die"*** (Genesis 2:16-17). Even from the beginning, God gives humanity a large amount of free will. People are not God's puppets, but God establishes the relationship he has with us as a creator and his creation, a relationship that he designs not to be broken.

Luke 15:11 and the following tells us the relationship of the lost son and his father. In the parable of the lost son, the second son wants to be independent and runs away from his father. He thinks that he will be happier if he lives his life by himself. But when he loses everything, the younger son decides to come back home. When the prodigal son comes back home, his father embraces him and welcomes him. The younger son experiences true happiness when he is with his father. God is like our parents.

6. Conclusion

As we celebrate Independence Day, we are reminded that our country established its independence many years ago. Although we celebrate our independence during this holiday, we are also reminded that we are never independent from God. No matter how hard we try, there is no way we can run away from the Lord. Although we may be going through a tough time or difficulties in life, God reminds us this morning that he knows what is going on and is with us. We know that he has the power and the knowledge to overcome anything we experience in this life. Such an intimate relationship between God and us tells us how much God loves us.

7. Application

Today's service is very special for me because I get to worship the Lord with my older brother and my sister-in-law, who came from Korea. My family moved from Korea 36 years ago. Although I have traveled back and forth a few times, this is only the second time that my brother has been able to visit us during that 36 years. God knows that I need brotherly love. I believe that God sent him to see me. His visit reminds me of God's everlasting love.

My father used to say that the Americans stole me and my family from him. Although God called me to serve God's people in the US, my parents and

my brothers and sisters missed us very much. There were many times when I felt like a prodigal son while living far away from my family in Korea. Even though my brother and his wife are busy serving their local church in Seoul, Korea, they made the time to come to visit us. In many ways, his visit is a reminder for me that God loves me more than I deserve. I am so grateful that they are able to visit and worship with us this morning.

No one on this earth knows us better than God does. God knows everything about us. The Lord provides us, leads us, guides us, and protects us regardless of where we are in life. Although there may be times when we might want to escape from God, we know that the Lord's presence is with us wherever we go. As parents take care of their baby, our Lord keeps watching over us to make sure that we are all right.

Thanks be to God whose unfailing love endures forever. Amen.