

WHEREVER I GO, GOD IS

Psalm 139:1-18, 23-24

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July 19, 2020

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Once a very eccentric lady died, leaving a will that gave all her possessions to God. The will came to a judge to be probated and after deliberation he ruled the will was not valid because he said, “God could not be found in this district.” Is God in this district? Can God be found? In the midst of this pandemic crisis, we wonder. The sense of isolation, loneliness, fear about the future and fatigue. Our text today deals with profound existential questions. Is God here? Near us? With us?

The good news is that God is present. What a breathtaking thought—wherever I go, God is (vv. 7-12). Note, please, that God is not contained in or limited to a church building! To the farthest reach of space or to the region of death, there God is. The traditional thought of this time was that Creator God had no access to the grave, the region of the dead.

It doesn't matter how far you drift from God or if you deny God. God is. No matter what difficult circumstances you're in—God is present. No matter how dark your world feels. God is. You cannot go where God is not. As one commentary put it, “Life is saturated with God” [*Texts for Preaching*, Year A, p. 409].

Throughout this psalm, there is this testimony that God sees us, knows us and cares. In v. 13, God is pictured as knowing us even in the womb. I'm thankful our church partners with The Pregnancy Help Center, offering life-affirming alternatives when unexpected pregnancy occurs. But I'm also thankful for a God who sees all people. The imprisoned, immigrant, black and brown people who have been wounded by racism, the child who is bullied at school, the youth who feels dumb and fat and unpopular, the senior adult who feels pushed aside.

And God wants to be with us in our suffering. In fact, in the Person of His Son, God has joined us and come alongside us.

But here's the challenge. Most of us keep the ever-present God at arm's length. When we need God most, we often push God away. And most of that happens because we are ruled by our emotions and not by faith. I don't know about you, but I don't see any place in this psalm where the writer talks about how he feels. It is faith that matters.

Kathryn Greene-McCreight writes: “In God's eyes we are not how we feel, we are not what we think... We are what God does with us, and what God does with us is to save us from our best yet perverse efforts to separate ourselves from his presence” [*Darkness Is My Only Companion*, p. 89].

This psalm concludes beautifully with a prayer (vv. 23-24). It is a call for us to surrender our self-salvation schemes and begin trusting God to shape our lives. It is surrender, submission, a yielding. Let's say this aloud, together: **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. Amen.**