

**St Marc's Grenoble  
Psalms for the Summer**

**Psalm 139 – A Psalm of being known**

**Psalm 139; 1 Corinthians 13:11-13; John 1:1-5**

If you were born in the 1960s, you would have been brought up to the sounds of 'The Beatles'. Most of their songs were love songs: *All you need is love, love, love*, *She loves you*, *I want to hold your hand*. Some were fun songs like *We all live in a yellow submarine*. But others were much more searching. As a small child the words of *When I get older losing my hair* seemed a long long way away. But now the song seems much more relevant:

*When I get older, losing my hair, Many years from now, Will you still be sending me a valentine, birthday greetings, bottle of wine?  
If I'd been out till quarter to three, Would you lock the door? Will you still need me, will you still feed me, When I'm sixty four?*

Will you still need me? Will you still feed me? When I am sixty-four?

This is the voice of an older person asking 'Am I still important?' 'Am I still significant?' 'Am I still needed'?

2,000 years ago Jesus would have been brought up to the sounds of the psalms being sung. They are hymn book of the Jewish people. And in their hymns the Jews set down all that was going on in their hearts and brought them to God in prayer or in praise. There is a psalm for every occasion and for every human situation.

Our psalm today, 139 is all about personal significance and being known by God.

*O LORD, you have searched me and known me. <sup>2</sup> You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.<sup>3</sup> You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.<sup>4</sup> Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely.*

The writer of the psalm knew that he was important, that he was significant and that he was fully known by God.

Whoever we are. Wherever we are. How ever old we are. We are known by God. Not controlled. Not puppets on a string. Not robots. But free and responsible human beings made in God's image – and known by God. Every action. Every thought. Every Word. Known by a God who came into the world that we that might have *fullness of life*. (John 10:10)

More than that the writer of psalm 139 knew that he was living his life in the presence of a God who loved him. And no matter what was happening - God was with him:

*<sup>5</sup> You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.<sup>6</sup> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.<sup>7</sup> Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?<sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. <sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,<sup>10</sup> even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.<sup>11</sup>*

However tough life is. However lonely we feel. No matter how far we want to run away – God is with us. Even if we want to run away from God himself, to let go of God, he does not let go:

*<sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,<sup>10</sup> even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.<sup>11</sup>*

For many of us these last few years have been particularly tough. Covid and War across the world seems to have changed everything. Every aspect of life feels a little bit harder. Prices are higher. Gas and electricity seem impossibly expensive. Dealing with government is a little bit harder. Getting a job feels a little bit harder. Many people can seem a little bit more distant. Less friendly. Even the country we call home, may feel less like home to you – we may feel less wanted, less secure and even less safe.

Here the psalmist tells us that God holds us fast.

And many of us may have struggled with our mental health. For many getting up in the mornings has become a struggle. Meeting people can drain us of precious energy and going to the supermarket involves making too many decisions. We just can't do it. We can feel overwhelmed by the normal everyday things that we used to take for granted.

In Psalm 139 we read:

*If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,"<sup>12</sup> even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.*

St John picks up this very theme at the beginning of his Gospel. However dark things may feel – the darkness will not overcome the light. However long the struggle - the light will win out (John 1: 5). Jesus will be the last word.

Living in these post pandemic days – with hugely increased utility bills and with war and political instability all around us, many of us will be feeling the weight of the struggle. Like me you may have had some days when you have felt very low. For some those days may have

stretched into weeks. For others, those days may have caused you to dwell on old hurts and disappointments or to ask searching questions about meaning and significance. Why are things so difficult? What is this life all about?

Time after time the psalms point us to the struggles faced by the Jewish people. Time after time we read that they turn God and find themselves all over again.

How many mirrors do you have in your home? How often do you look at yourself in a mirror? Some studies say that the average person looks in a mirror 8 times a day. Other say it could be as many as 60 times a day? And what do you see? What does your reflection tell you? The Bible is like a mirror that lets us see ourselves as God sees us:

*<sup>13</sup> For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.<sup>14</sup> I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.<sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. <sup>16</sup> Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed. O LORD, you have searched me and known me.*

Each one of us is fearfully and wonderfully made. God knew us before we were born. He knows us through and through. Whoever we are. Wherever we are. However old we are. We are known by Him. Not puppets on a string. Not robots. But free and responsible human beings made in God's image – and fully known. Every action. Every thought. Every Word. Known by a God who came into the world that we that might have fullness of life (John 10:10). More than that the writer of psalm 139 knew that he was living his life in the presence of a God who loved him. No matter what was happening - God was always with him.

This year I am going to be 64. And I am losing my hair. 'Am I still important'? 'Am I still significant'? 'Am I still needed'? God says Yes. Yes. Undoubtedly Yes.

If today you have come to church asking the questions 'Am I still important'? 'Am I still significant'? 'Am I still needed'? The answer is Yes. Yes. God says Yes. He knows you through and through and is with you always. However dark life feels, the light is never far away. And the light will always win out.

Amen.