

September 4, 2022  
Communion

Psalm 139:1-12, 24-25

### “No Place to Hide”

One of the great youth church traditions is a game that takes place in the church at night, in the dark, is a form of hide and seek called, “Sardines.” One person goes to hide and when you find them, instead of calling out that you know where they are – you hide with them...until in the end everyone is hiding together, and one lone person is wandering through the church – which does creak and make noise at night – trying to find everyone else.

While in Seminary I was working in a church on the weekends and at the end of Youth Group on Sunday there was a bit of time and the kids wanted to finish the time with a game of Sardines. I reminded them I didn’t know the church very well...which only made the kids want to play it more. We played a round and it went so quickly they wanted to do it again...and this time I wound up wandering through dirt floors and pipes in the bowels of the church – all by myself – for quite a long time...in fact – I was so bad at finding anyone, the kids came out of hiding and accused me of not looking for them because no one could be that bad. I had over-estimated my ability to manage the situation and it was embarrassing.

Our Psalmist today tells us *we can count on God* to be far superior to our efforts when it comes to searching and finding. Though, sometimes, we struggle with being found by God in *places we aren’t sure we should be*. Our understanding of ourselves constantly evolves – at least that’s what we hope for. And it *can be painful to grow through* who we were and are into who God is making us to be.

This Psalm is a favorite. There is something deeply reassuring that ***the one we rely on for life truly knows us*** and not just our current self-understanding which may turn out to be at root of our self-defeating patterns of behavior. This Psalm is powerful both in times of need and joy. We are given permission ***to believe almighty God thinks it is worthwhile to know us...even when we aren’t so sure.***

On the days we have clear self-understanding *we are stronger and kinder* than on other days. The key to getting a clearer picture of what is real in our lives is to *accept God’s searching and knowing us – and allow God’s spirit to help us know as we are known*. The first and most terrible temptation was to want to displace

God...we have the opportunity in our lives to live on *the opposite side* of that equation and **accept the validity of God's knowing and discover who we can authentically be as God's children.**

This awareness helps us to find the courage to ***let go of who we thought we were*** – or who we thought God wanted us to be – or who we needed to be to feel safe – because ***who we are in the eyes of God who knows us best is better than the "us" we want to protect from God's transforming gaze.***

No wandering through this Psalm – as we have just done – is as powerful as hearing it. So, let's listen to bits of it in various versions again.

Please close your eyes -settle in – and relax in the good news of God's presence.  
(The Voice):

Can I go anywhere apart from Your Spirit?

Is there anywhere I can go to escape Your *watchful* presence?

<sup>8</sup> If I go up into heaven, You are there.

If I make my bed in the realm of the dead, You are there.

<sup>9</sup> If I ride on the wings of morning,

if I make my home in the most isolated part of the ocean,

<sup>10</sup> Even then You will be there to guide me;

Your right hand will embrace me, *for You are always there.*

<sup>11</sup> Even if I *am afraid and think to myself*, "There is no doubt the darkness will swallow me,

the light around me will soon be turned to night,"

<sup>12</sup> *You can see* in the dark, for it is not dark to Your eyes.

For You the night is just as bright as the day.

Darkness and light are the same to Your eyes. (Pause)

(New Revised Standard)

Where can I go from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?

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 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> If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,

and night wraps itself around me,"<sup>[a]</sup>  
12 even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is as bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light to you. (Pause)

(The Message)

Is there any place I can go to avoid your Spirit?  
to be out of your sight?  
If I climb to the sky, you're there!  
If I go underground, you're there!  
If I flew on morning's wings  
to the far western horizon,  
You'd find me in a minute—  
you're already there waiting!  
Then I said to myself, "Oh, God even sees me in the dark!  
At night I'm immersed in the light!"  
It's a fact: darkness isn't dark to you;  
night and day, darkness and light, they're all the same to you. (Pause)

When we feel lost. When we wander through the darkness alone – God help us to know we are mistaken. We are never alone. We are never far from the one who knows and loves us. God's powerful and caring hands always hold us fast. *Nowhere to hide* means we are *never beyond the bounds of grace*. Breathe in the presence of God – and know the liberating reassurance of being known - Thanks be to God.