

Living in Fear & Wonder

Psalm 139 Matt Zainea

Our lives and our culture can be so confusing. Just think of our recent Christmas season. Our culture celebrates this holiday, but it is so full of pantheism and materialism that “Christ” has been lost in the process. The confusion of who we are affects even the smartest. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy has said, “At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.” If we really examine this statement, it is absurd. Yet these are the ruling confusions of our culture. All of this absurdity is tangled with our deepest understanding of life.

For example, how do we walk happily in a society that aborts over 1 million babies each year? As we think through these issues on Sanctity of Life Sunday, let's look into Psalm 139. The Psalms shape our moods and our lives, giving expression to our feelings. They also shape our understanding of the world. Psalm 139 can be broken into 3 parts.

3 ideas to shape our lives around:

- 1) God is present & good (v. 1-12) – Rest
- 2) God is our maker (v. 13-15) – Fear
- 3) God has an enemy (v. 17-22) – Choose!

I. God Is Present & Good – Rest

Psalm 139:1-3 - O LORD, you have searched me 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.

David, the psalmist, begins by exploring God's relationship with humanity. God knows us personally. He is not distant or distracted. This is the true heart of liberty: There is a God who made us and cares about us.

Psalm 139:4 - Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.

God has knowledge of our words before they hit the tongue. Our words and our person are intimately connected.

Psalm 139:5-6 - You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Here we see God's goodness. Because of His protection, we are free. This is a great mystery that goes beyond us.

Psalm 139:7-10 - Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. 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.

He is everywhere, and this is a good thing! Our culture of isolation hates this because we worship privacy. But this is part of God's goodness to us.

Psalm 139:11-12 - If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

God is greater than the dark! None of my acts are hidden. None of your acts are hidden. Nothing escapes His sight.

II. God is our Maker – Fear

Psalm 139:13 - For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Here the psalmist switches gears from God knowing us, to His intimate construction. He actively created and formed each of us.

Psalm 139:14-15 - I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,

"Fearfully and wonderfully" – This may seem like a strange combination to us. We understand the "wonderful" part, but what does "fearfully" mean? It means: "This is all so overwhelming. We don't want to mess with the person who made all of this. Whoever made this should be worshipped!"

For an amazing video of how we are "fearfully made":

<http://blog.ted.com/2011/11/14/conception-to-birth-visualized-alexander-tsiaras-on-ted-com>

III. God Has An Enemy – Choose!

Psalm 139:17-18 - How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.

Here David is saying he wants to align himself with God.

Psalm 139:19 - If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men!

God has a bitter enemy – Satan and his demons. They ruin others. Our culture has no concept of this warfare, and we as Christians have lost sight of this as well.

Psalm 139:21-22 - Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD, and abhor those who rise up against you? I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.

Most of the time, the things that consume our minds are meaningless. We must awaken from our slumber and stay aware of this warfare that is all around us! David hated God's enemies. How do we hate? Our hate must be directed toward Satan, not towards the people he is using to spread evil.

How to Hate What God Hates:

- 1) Begin by hating the part of my heart that partners with Satan.
- 2) Ask God to show me the activities all around me which war against His kingdom.
- 3) Ask God how He would like me to be different.
- 4) Move.
- 5) Talk with wise people.

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Life!

Prayer:

Almighty and eternal God, who created this world and all of us in it, on this Sanctity of Life Sunday, we thank You that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Help us to lead people to see Your work in the creation of life and to consider human life as sacred. Strengthen us to make a difference in stopping the destruction of newly created life in the mother's womb.

Empower us to protect and defend all to whom You give life until that day when You choose to complete that life. Give us awareness to recognize and respond to Your call when You place before us opportunities to care for orphans, the elderly, and Your children with special needs. Use us as conduits to share with them the precious love and redemption offered by Your Son Jesus, so that they may have eternal life in His name. Amen.

Benediction:

Go forth as God's own children, clothed with compassion, kindness, and patience, firm in your faith, alert to the needs around you, courageous and strong in the knowledge that God is our Source. God is present. God is good.