

Being Known and Accepted
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

When I was asked if I would give the sermon for this particular Sunday I must admit that I was rather nervous and apprehensive. Today we observe Human Relations Day, a time to look at ourselves and the relationships we have with one another. When I went over the readings for this week, I knew that God would want me to share what this passage means to me.

The first section of this Psalm is really trying to get across the idea of how well we are known by God. You can almost imagine the Psalmist (which in this passage is David) smiling to himself at his discovery that God knows him so intimately.

“Lord, you have searched me and known me, you know when I sit down and rise up, you search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely” (v. 1-4)

There is such a sense of excitement and joy that comes through the words, that he says to himself, it's too much for me, I cannot get my head around the fact that you know me so well, God.

And I wonder how many of us here have that feeling of being known intimately by God?

And if any of us have that feeling of being known, the next question is whether that is something that makes you excited and happy, like our friend David, or whether it is something that unnerves you or even frightens you?

We are told that God is “acquainted with all our ways” and discerns our thoughts. It has the potential to sound a little bit scary. A bit like someone is watching you ... all the time ...

But I would like to protest that God is not a giant surveillance camera in the sky; our ways, our thoughts, and so on are not going to be mysteriously reported to the authorities. God is not waiting to tell tales on us. (Although I'm not sure whom God would report to if that was the case!)

God does know us, but God accepts us as we are.

This Psalm concerns itself with celebrating God's love and acceptance of us as creations of God.

So maybe God *is* “acquainted with all our ways,” but what does that matter if *we* don't know that we are accepted by God?

The more I live my life and work in communities, I become more sure that one of the most deep-rooted problems in our society is people's inability or unwillingness to accept and love themselves.

Daily I see such deep-rooted unhappiness, and it manifests itself in all kinds of ways and through all kinds of avenues. People who are hell-bent on self-destruction, completely wrapped up in anger or lifelong guilt-trips, people who are out to destroy things and other people because they cannot accept themselves for who they are.

We are invited by this Psalmist's beautiful words to really deepen our relationship with Christ as someone who knows us completely and loves us as we are. There are no secret sections of ourselves hidden from God, we cannot introduce ourselves to God as the person we want to be tomorrow, or next week, nor can we pretend that we are someone we are not. God knows us and loves us now, at this moment, in all our glory and in all our shame.

The question is, really, whether we are able to or want to accept this offer and let God's hand (the same God who is acquainted with all our ways) rest upon us and fill us with a peaceful love for ourselves as God's beautiful creations.

And if we do choose to accept ourselves as creations of God, we can then spend some time seeing ourselves as fearfully and wonderfully made.

Our Psalmist says:

“For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

What a wonderful and frightening conclusion to come to.

How different our world would be, I wonder, if we were able to see ourselves and the others around us as wonderful creations of God?

And just as we are wonderfully made, the Psalmist uses the words “fearfully made” — quite an interesting description. But I think this hints towards the seriousness of creation. It is not something to be taken lightly or regarded with disdain.

We have been made into powerful beings, and yet we have been given choices.

We are fearfully made, and as we recognize ourselves as God's creations, let us take seriously the lives that we have been given and use them as God desires — to love our neighbor as ourselves, the most important commandment of all, and to act as servants to one another.

Last April, I had the privilege of attending the United Methodist General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas. Attending General Conference was a rewarding experience. I learned a lot about myself and about the church... Overall my experiences at General Conference were

rather indescribable. This past April there was a very important issue that was taken to the plenary floor. ****Share about the witness on the plenary floor****

And as we turn our thoughts and our praise to our creator, let us remember that, while we are each a unique creation, we are but one part of a wider creation.

An acceptance of ourselves as God's beautiful creation does not come without responsibility.

If we are children of God, we are called to be guardians of creation.

As we learn that we are known and loved, let us use some of the life-giving energy from that to turn some of our attention outwards towards the rest of creation.

Today in the United Methodist Church we observe "Human Relations Day." A day to recognize the right of all God's children in realizing their potential as human beings in relationship with each other. Every one of God's children deserves justice and equality. Every one of God's children deserves to open doors to success.

We are but one part — an important part, but still just one part — of this wider world that is also fearfully and wonderfully made.

God calls us to look at the world through Christ's eyes. If we truly do, then we will see ourselves and others as beautiful creations of God, and then we will be able to take on our role as guardians and lovers of creation.