

You Matter

Series: Lifted UP!

Psalm 139:1-18; John 9:1-34

September 18, 2016

Lightning was flashing, thunder was roaring, black clouds looked angry; and the train was traveling fast! The tension and fear among the passengers was evident; however, one little boy, who was sitting by himself, seemed completely unaware of the circumstances and the raging storm. One of the passengers spoke to him and said, "Aren't you afraid to travel alone on this train on such a stormy night?" The little boy looked up and answered with a smile, "No ma'am, I'm not afraid! My daddy is the engineer!"

There is a painting by Dutch painter Rembrandt which portrays the biblical story of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. Perhaps some of you remember this painting! The little ship occupied by Jesus and the Disciples is being hit by a huge wave. You can feel the fear running through each disciple. The storm is all around. The rigging on the boat is loose and blowing in the wind.

It's marvelous to realize that even though all the disciples are panic-stricken, the disciples had to awaken Jesus to tell Him about the storm. It wasn't because Jesus didn't care, or because He was indifferent to their needs. It was because Jesus had such trust in God that He was sleeping right through the storm. Rembrandt does a wonderful work in this painting, and when you look at it, you've got to say to yourself, "I've got to learn how I can have complete trust in God."

Jesus of Nazareth once said:

*"And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself."*¹

Last week, we began our series, "Lifted UP!" We began discovering the fact that when Jesus is lifted up, we too will be Lifted UP! Last week, we learned that we are Lifted UP! because we are God's children through His love for us.

Today, I want us to explore the fact that you can be Lifted UP! because with God, you matter.

Turn with me in your Bible to Psalm 139. David, the psalmist was utterly amazed that God was always so intimately involved in all the circumstances of his life! And when we consider how God is so involved in our lives today, we are astounded at the wonder of God's grace and greatness and how much we matter.

READ PSALM 139:1-18

At any age in life, you need a personal agenda for life, for if you do not create for yourself a life agenda, one will be provided for you either by the events and circumstances of life, or by some other person.

We might ask ourselves a question as we begin to analyze this beautiful psalm: Does God know us?

All of us need someone who knows us, encourages us, comforts us, and lifts us up!

We all have that basic human instinct to want somebody to know the things we like and the things we dislike, to know where we are in life and to know where we have been in life.

¹ John 12:32 (NLT)

Is there anyone who really knows us?

Is there anyone who really understands us?

The answer to those questions is a resounding “Yes!” God knows all!

In verses 2-5, David writes:

Verse 2: “You know when I sit and when I rise”: God knows David’s daily activities.

“You perceive my thoughts from afar”: God knows what David is thinking even before David thinks it.

Verse 3: “You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways”: God knows where David went and God passed judgment on it.

Verse 4: “Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord”: God knew David’s words before he spoke them.

Verse 5: “You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me”: God has His providential hand upon David and David is surrounded by God’s hand of protection.

Does God know you and I? Yes, He does!

God knows your habits, good or bad. He knows us inside and out, and He loves us and cares for us.

God wants to lift us up with encouragement.

Where then is this God who knows us and wants to lift us up with encouragement?

I think all of us have had times when we wonder and ask ourselves, “Where is God in the midst of all my circumstances?”

David answered that question. Verses 7-8:

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.²

In the realm of light, life, heaven, darkness, and even death, God is there!

David looks to the east and to the west, and to the far side of the sea, and God was there. Wherever David went, God was there!

Are you hurting right now? God is there!

Are you experiencing great joy in your life right now? God is there!

Are you confused? God is there!

Are you lonely? God is there!

Are you afraid? God is there!

Are you desperate to find forgiveness and healing? God is there!

Are you longing for peace? God is there!

Do you desire assurance from the Almighty? God is there!

God knows each and every one of us. When we turn to God we find our help! David turned to God and he found the power of God!

When he contemplated the great power of God, he looked back at his own creation. Verse 13:

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.³

² Psalm 139:7-8 (NIV)

³ Psalm 139:13 (NIV)

The power of God was real to David in his own creation. You are a wonderful and unique person because God designed you. If you have a wrinkle or two, if you have freckles or are short, it's just a natural result of God's hand working of the fabric.

Can God help you in your greatest joy and your deepest hurt? The answer is a resounding "Yes!" Wherever you are in life, God can help you. As long as God is guiding your life, He will bring to you a better perspective of life.

So, trust God, He is a God of wonder.

And I believe that the God who has lifted us up in the past then can do it now if He wants. In fact, I'm convinced that God intervened even in the formation of our nation. Our founding fathers, by and large, were praying people. And God answered their prayers. I truly believe that God has blessed and protected our land in many more ways than we will ever realize.

On August 27, 1776, not long after the Declaration of Independence was signed, George Washington's Continental Army of 8,000 men found itself trapped at the water's edge of the East River, near Brooklyn, NY. 20,000 of the finest battle-hardened British soldiers were poised to attack. Washington's little army was trapped, and the Revolutionary War was going to be over almost before it had really begun.

But for some reason the British delayed their attack, possibly waiting for their fleet to sail up the river and close the trap. But suddenly, rains came and a strong northeast wind arose, preventing the fleet from sailing.

When night fell, Washington began to evacuate his army across the mile-wide river in small boats, a few men at a time, trying to save as many as he could. As the light of morning approached, he knew that his boats would soon become easy targets for the British artillery. But just as the sun arose, an unusually dense fog formed and visibility dropped to just 6 yards. The fog remained in place until the very last boat, carrying Washington himself, set off across the river.

Then it suddenly lifted, and the British were stunned to see the shore empty of men. Guns were fired at Washington's boat in the river, but it was out of range. And not a man of the Continental Army was lost!

Of course, we might consider that just a lucky break. After all, there's no proof that God had anything to do with the sudden rains and wind and unusually dense fog.

But that is not what those Continental Army soldiers thought. Many of them kept diaries, and almost all of them attributed this "amazing coincidence" to the intervention and protection of God.

And that is just one of a series of amazing "coincidences" that occurred during the Revolutionary War. God has certainly blessed America!

But will God continue to bless America? Should He? God has said in 2 Chronicles 7:14

if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.⁴

Folks, it's a time to be earnest in our prayers, and also in keeping our vows to God. Whether we acknowledge it or not, ISIS has declared war against our nation. I'm convinced that the horrors occurring now in the Middle East are but previews of what they intend for us.

⁴ 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV)

The brokenness of our society, the lack of servility, the seeming loss of our moral compass, are all signs of a people who have lost their Godly way and turn to wicked ways.

If ever there was a time for fervent prayer, it is now. If ever there was a time when people of God should be united in prayer, it is now. But not just because our world is in such trouble. It is also because we matter to God, and when we turn to Him, we will be Lifted UP!

A young boy was eagerly looking forward to the birthday party of his friend who lived only a few blocks away. However, when the day finally arrived, a snowstorm was making driving hazardous. But the boy insisted that didn't matter – he could walk to his friend's home. And he could do it all by himself. He didn't need any help. In fact, he didn't want any help. He was a big boy now.

Still his father hesitated. "But Dad," he pleaded, "all the other kids will be there. Their parents are letting them go." Finally, the father replied, "All right, if that's what you really want to do."

Overjoyed, the boy bundled up for the trip and plunged out into the storm. The swirling snow sometimes made it difficult for him to see, and it took him nearly half an hour of trudging through the snow to get there.

But finally he was there. He climbed the porch steps, and reached up to ring the doorbell. As he did he turned briefly to look back behind him, and through the blowing snow he saw the receding figure of a man. It was his father who had followed him all the way just to make sure that he arrived safely at his destination.

I like that! I like the idea of a father who would allow his son to tackle something difficult on his own, but who at the same time would make sure to be there if he were needed. I think that's one of the characteristics and evidences of real love.

You know, I'm convinced that each of us needs someone to watch over us, someone who really cares about us, someone who'll celebrate with us in the great events of our lives, who'll offer us a shoulder to cry on in seasons of sorrow, and encouraging words when we need them most.

Jesus said:

"And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself."⁵

⁵ John 12:32 (NLT)