

A young mom was putting an address on a card to send to a friend. Her young son Brent was sitting and watching. She decided to find out how much he knew. She asked him, “Brent, where do you live?” “At my new house,” he replied. “That’s correct, but do you know what street you live on?” “Palmer,” he said proudly. “Right!” said his mom. “Can you say, 1314 Palmer?” She was delighted when Brent repeated that exactly. Then his mom asked, “What is your last name?” Brent paused blurted out, “Douglas! Brent Douglas!” “Dear, that’s your first and middle name, what is your LAST name?” Brent thought for a moment. Finally he said, “It’s Come Here! Brent Douglas Come Here!” No he didn’t exactly know who he was, but at least Brent knew where he should be.

“Does God See Me?” “Does God Hear me?” “Does God know me?” These are the questions that we should take seriously because God wants us to know the answers. And these are the same questions asked in our passage today. This is a psalm about personal identity. And our passage today gives us the answers. Answers showing that we are Seen, we are Heard, and we are Known by God.

We are seen, heard and known intimately. “O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.” This is not impersonal. God is actually very personal, maybe even too personal. God searches us and knows us perfectly. Nothing is hidden from God’s knowledge. This means there are no excuses, no justifications, no fabrications. Do you know someone who thought they could hide something from God? Please don’t say their name out loud. I’m sure they soon found out, as did I, that hiding anything from God is a fruitless endeavor.

How personally does God know us? “You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.” Our every thought, our very action, is known by God. David knew this personally and even warned his son Solomon, as he was about to be anointed king of Israel, In 1 Chronicles 28. “And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts”

This intimate knowledge goes further still. “You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord.” God’s knowledge is perfect and God is everywhere. Think about the vast expanse of the cosmos. About the billions of stars in just one galaxy and about the billions of galaxies in the universe. God isn’t just passively aware of each star and planet. God knows each and every one by name. Not only that, God knows every orbiting particle in every atom of our body. That is how great and deep God’s knowledge is.

Our great Creator intricately made us and knows every part of us. Not just our bodies, but the secret places of our minds. It is both wonderful and scary to know that nothing I do or think is hidden from God.

Doing the right thing for the wrong motives, known. Doing the wrong thing intentionally, known. Doing what is right, known. We are known.

David realizes that there is no way to get away from God. And I’ll be the first to admit, there have been times when I wanted to get away from those all-seeing eyes. Wanted my privacy. Wanted to shut the door and lock God out. But in those cases as I look back, I realize that every time I ran from God, I ended up running right into our Creator. (repeat)

During David’s time, there were many gods each one was confined to a particular locality. There were gods of the hills and gods of the plains. It was hard for anyone to fathom that The God of Israel could exist in other countries. Even the people of Israel had doubts. But David knew better. Even at the farthest ends of the earth, David could not get away from God. “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.”

This reminds me of the story told by a man about when he was a young boy. His family decided to move to another state. The night before they left, the young boy went into his room, knelt down by the bed and said, “Good-bye God. We’re going to Montana.” He was just so sure that they were moving away from God. When they arrived guess what the young boy found out? God was in Montana too.

Did you know that when God gets too close some people find themselves running away. That’s what happened to the prophet Jonah. God had gotten too close for comfort and Jonah decided it was time to go on the run. God told him to go to Ninevah. Capitol city of Assyria, Israel’s arch enemy. Jonah was told to preach to them so they could escape God’s judgment. But Jonah, he wanted them dead. He wanted that so badly. So Jonah boarded a ship to parts unknown. Why did he do this? Because Jonah did not think that God lived in countries far from Israel. These countries didn’t know or worship God. This was the God of the Hebrews, not the God of other nations. But boy did God have a surprised for Jonah. God met him on open seas. Found a convincing whale, I mean way, to make Jonah preach peace to a people that Jonah felt were beyond God’s grace and care.

The first Russian cosmonaut that went into space, came back with this message. “We looked all through space and did not find God anywhere.” Contrast with a young airman from the Royal Canadian Air Force. He seemed to understand what King David was trying to say. Listen to this poem he wrote about his early flying experiences:

Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I’ve topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or even eagle flew
And, while with silent lifting mind I’ve trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

God is everywhere, whether we believe it or not.

Finally David realizes. Not only can we not run away from God, we can't even hide from our Creator where we are. David wanted to hide from God, for he said: "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. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 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, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

The darkness can't hide us from God. We weren't hidden from God even when we were hidden in our mother's womb. Even when our bodies as yet had no form, God saw us and God knows the beginning and ending of our lives.

The light bulb went on for David. God's knowledge of him was a good, not a bad thing. It was to David's benefit that God was paying such special attention to him. "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."

In the end, David invites God to know him even better, for he said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." It finally dawned on him that God's interest in him, was not to find fault, but because God's heart was full of perfect love for him, David.

John Donne was an English cleric and poet from the early 1600's. King James I (you know the guy that commissioned our beloved King James Version) He appointed Donne to be dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. But in 1623 John became ill and thought he was dying of the plague. While recovering, he wrote the book *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*. These devotions were about his struggle with death and human relationships.

Flash forward to 1995. This was the year that a Broadway play called *Wit* was accepted into the theater world. It was written by Margaret Edson, a kindergarten teacher. The play was based on Donne's works and received a Pulitzer Prize in 1999. HBO would release a movie version of it, starring Emma Thompson. *Wit* is the story of Vivian Bearing, a literary scholar specializing in the works of John Donne. Suddenly, Bearing discovers that she, like Donne, is struggling with a life-threatening illness. The film becomes a personal of journal Bearing's struggle with cancer and death. It describes how Bearing faces it with biting humor and amazing wit.

In a very moving closing scene, she is visited by her old literature professor, Dr. E. M. Ashford. Dr. Ashford is on her way to her grandson's birthday party, but stops by the hospital to see her former student. Vivian is in the throes of death, and in need of human warmth and compassion. Instead of remaining distant, her old professor takes off her shoes, lays down next to her in the bed and puts her arms around her. Dr. Ashford asks if Vivian would like her to recite something from John Donne. Vivian shakes her head, "No." So Dr. Ashford pulls from her bag a book she had bought for her grandson's birthday. She starts to read from Margaret Wise Brown's children's book *The Runaway Bunny*. She reads softly, "Once there was a little bunny who wanted to run away. So he said to his mother, 'I am running away.' 'If you run away,' said his mother, 'I will run after you. For you are my little bunny.' 'If you run after me,' said the little bunny, 'I will become a fish in a trout stream and I will swim away from you.' 'If you become a fish in a trout stream,' said his mother, 'I will become a fisherman and I will fish for you.'"

Then, thinking out loud, Dr. Ashford said, "Look at that. A little allegory of the soul. No matter where it hides, God will find it. See, Vivian?"

The message in the philosophy of John Donne, the story of the runaway Bunny and the heart of the Bible are the same: "You just can't get away from God." You are Seen, you are Heard, You are known. Say this with me. I am seen, I am Heard, and I am known.

If you run from God, God runs after you. If you run to God, God embraces you. Because wherever you are, and wherever you go, God's eyes of love will follow you.