

**Nowhere to Hide**  
**Psalm 139**  
***March 22, 2020***

In Scotland we had long nights and short days in the winter months. It was dark when we went to school in the morning and dark when we left school at just before 4pm. During those dark evenings after supper the kids in the neighbourhood would often play hide and seek. You probably played that game here as kids. Someone would be “it” and have to stand under the lamppost counting out to a certain number while we scurried off through the entryways and gardens all around the square. It was great fun hiding and not being found. We would make sure we discovered really interesting places to hide: sometimes behind garden sheds, sometimes behind trees, or, if we were really adventurous, well off the streets in the high grass and bushes of the close by field. We never lost anyone completely because you would often have some kid who would laugh or make a noise and give you away. But it was always the hope that you would never be found out. But usually you were.

In our Psalm today the writer reminds us that there is nowhere to hide from God. Today, as we live under this pandemic threat this could be a really positive truth for us. Yes, even today, whether we are keeping our families safe at home, or you are looking after others, or sitting alone with your thoughts, God is fully aware of our situation. The writer concludes: *Where can I escape from your spirit, where flee from your presence?*

It reminds me of George Orwell’s novel, **1984**. In the novel Winston Smith lives in London which is part of the country Oceania which is a totalitarian society led by Big Brother, which censors everyone’s behavior, even their thoughts. Winston is disgusted with his oppressed life and secretly longs to join the fabled Brotherhood, a supposed group of underground rebels’ intent on overthrowing the government. Everywhere one goes Big Brother is Watching.

Is this the tone of the Psalm? I don’t think so. On the contrary, what we have is a person who finds great comfort and strength in the idea

that God knows him inside out. He expresses his faith in a God of grace and love in this Psalm, not a God of oppression and judgment. But many of us, and perhaps especially right now amid our fears, when we think of God we drop into a kind of Orwellian world in which God becomes the legalistic, judgmental “big brother”.

You might remember that one of the first exchanges between our first parents, Adam and Eve, and God was about hiding. After they had eaten the forbidden fruit they tried to hide from God’s presence in the garden. Genesis records: *They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and the wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:8ff)*

This is not a game of hide and seeks; this is a situation that will become a pattern for the human family which each of us continues in our lives to some extent. We sometimes hide from God.

But look at the intimate, personal language of this Psalm. The Psalmist is in relationship with this caring God who is personally involved at the very deepest levels of creation and with the human family in particular. God has searched “*me*”; he knows all the paths “*I*” take;” you know where “*I*” sit down. In short, this is no abstract, philosophical discussion about God. It speaks to us rather of a relationship with God that is personal and that gives joy and meaning to life. The Psalmist derives great solace from God knowing him.

Doesn’t it melt your heart to know that the eternal, Sovereign Creator God actually seeks us out, knows everything about us, and still won’t give up on us? I love the way the Psalmist expresses this: *I praise you for you fill me with awe; wonderful you are, and wonderful your works. You know me through and through. (vs. 14)*

May the God who inspired this Psalmist, grant you peace and love through Jesus Christ our Lord.

***Amen***