

Saturday, September 12

Psalm 139 *LORD, you have searched me and known me; you know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.* (vv.1-2)

“Now we all have a face that we hide away from others....” (from *The Stranger* by Billy Joel). I recall these lyrics as I consider the Lord’s complete knowledge of “my sitting down and my rising up.”

No one person knows everything about me. No one person knows everything about you. Even our spouses or closest friends know only some of the things about you or me. In fact, we do not know everything about ourselves. Our secrets, our hidden faces, are known only to the Lord.

Scripture does not remind us of God’s complete knowledge of our secret places so that we may fear extortion or disclosure. On the contrary, realizing that the Lord is “acquainted with all my ways” encourages honesty within me. I can acknowledge the hidden faces, perhaps even show them to others, when I remember they are really not hidden after all.

Job 38:1-17; Psalm 55; Acts 15:22-35; John 11:45-54

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Sunday, September 6

Psalm 63 *O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.* (v.1 NRSV)

The unending rains of El Nino have given way to more than thirty days without rain. Once soggy lawns are now parched and dry. Lawn sprinklers run non-stop throughout the neighborhood while meteorologists see no rain in the extended forecast.

Our dry lawn is only a hint of the desert bareness recalled by the psalmist. Dry lawns and desert bareness help us glimpse the psalmist’s eager thirst for God. His dry and barren soul eagerly thirsts for spiritual water. As Jesus proclaimed, “...whoever drinks the water I give...will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give...will become...a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:14).

To paraphrase St. Augustine, God has made us for himself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Him. As one hymn declares:

O Christ, in thee my soul has found,
and found in thee alone,
the peace, the joy, I sought so long,
the bliss till now unknown.

Now none but Christ can satisfy,
none other name for me!
There’s love, and life, and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in thee.

—O Christ, in Thee My Soul

Job 25:1-6; 27:1-6; Psalm 98; Revelation 14:1-7, 13; Matthew 5:13-20

Monday, September 7

Psalm 41 *As for me, I said, “O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you.”* (v.4)

Churches everywhere are recovering a ministry of healing after many years of neglect. Weekly healing services are aspects of this renewed attention to healing in the church.

While a healing ministry suggests attention to our physical needs, it should include so much more, especially those emotional and spiritual wounds needing attention. Biblical healing includes wholeness, peace, Shalom.

The psalmist understood the deepest and most basic healing necessary for the human body and soul: “Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I

have sinned against you.” Our sin is our most basic disease. Our healing begins with confessing our sins, seeking forgiveness and restoring our fellowship with God. Jesus gives us our most important healing. “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

Pray for those who need this ultimate healing.

Job 32:1-10, 19—33:1, 19-28; Psalm 52; Acts 13:44-52; John 10:19-30

Tuesday, September 8

Psalm 45 *God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.* (v.8)

The kings of Israel were anointed with fragrant oil in their coronation celebration. This tradition began with Samuel’s anointing of Saul (1 Samuel 10:1) and David (1 Samuel 16:13) as the Lord’s chosen for leadership. By anointing with oil, the king was set aside as a temporal and spiritual leader and empowered by the Holy Spirit for this ministry.

Just as the kings of Israel were anointed in their coronation, and just as Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit in his baptism (Matthew 3:16), believers in him are also anointed by the Spirit.

We are set aside and empowered in our baptism to “Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share...in his eternal priesthood.” Just like the kings of Israel and Jesus himself, we are anointed.

Do we live as the anointed ones of God?

Job 29:1-20; Acts 14:1-18; John 10:31-42

Wednesday, September 9

Psalm 119:49-72 *I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts.* (v.63)

For the psalmist, the fear of the Lord intertwines and connects with His laws, decrees, precepts, commandments, and ordinances (see also Psalm 19:7-9). Why?

The fear of the Lord is not a “Godzilla-like” + fright or terror but rather implies awe and respect. In a sense, it suggests knowing that you are a limited, created, and sinful being while acknowledging God as boundless, creator, and holy. Like Isaiah, we come undone in the presence of Holy God (Isaiah 6:1-5).

Those who read Holy Scripture—God’s Word, law, decrees, precepts, commandments, and ordinances—on a regular basis, cannot help but know who they are. God’s grace, love, and mercy continually call us to forsake our self-centeredness for trust and confidence in Christ.

As the psalmist wrote: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding” (Psalm 111:10).

Job 29:1, 30:1-2, 16-31; Acts 14:19-28; John 11:1-16

Thursday, September 10

Psalm 50 *Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.* (v.15)

Shakespeare’s Henry V remains a favorite of mine since high school. The young English king leads his battle-weary and outnumbered soldiers to victory over the rested, numerically superior (and over-confident) French forces in the Battle of Agincourt on St. Crispin’s Day.

As the English regroup, gather their dead and wounded, and leave the battlefield, Henry commands his troops to sing *Non nobis*, “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your Name give glory” (Psalm 115:1). It is as we trust in God that He will rescue us: but to Him the glory.

Henry deflects the spotlight from himself to the Lord. We might say he earned the right for an end zone celebration, but Henry, like David (“the battle is the Lord’s” 1 Samuel 17:47) and Mary (“My soul magnifies the Lord” Luke 1:47) knew his victory and success came from the Lord.

Why not join the psalmist and Henry in *Non nobis* for the Lord’s victories in your life.

Job 29:1; 31:1-23; Acts 15:1-11; John 11:17-29

Friday, September 11

Psalm 51 *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* (v.7)

King David may have penned this confessional psalm after Nathan revealed David’s cover-up of adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11:1—12:12). David does not excuse himself, defend himself or attempt to shift responsibility; he states simply, “I have sinned against the Lord” (2 Samuel 12:13a).

Although he was a sinner, David was a man after God’s heart. He was a man after God’s heart because he knew the consequences of the broken relationship with God caused by our sin. David hungered and thirsted for communion with the living God, and so his revealed sin was recognized and confessed. Nathan assured David that his confessed sin was forgiven: “Now the Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die” (2 Samuel 12:13b).

God’s Word provides us that same assurance today: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Job 29:1; 31:24-40; Psalms 40, 54; Acts 15:12-21; John 11:30-44