

It was you!

A reflection on Psalm 139 for Ability Sunday - Steven Croft

Four movements

Many of the psalms are reflections about God: “The Lord is King...”. Psalm 139 addresses God directly from beginning to end in dialogue. This psalm is personal. There are four great movements of six verses. They alternate from the inside to the outside, back to the inside again and then out to the world.

You know me! (1-6)

You know me inside out, upside down and back to front. You know every thought, every word, every action, every journey, every resting place.

This psalm can be said by anyone. It is not a psalm for the special people. It’s a psalm for the entire human race, for people of every kind of ability, disabled people, autistic people, people of every race and tribe. God knows each of us.

This knowledge is not a burden or oppressive. This knowledge is “too wonderful for me” (6): something we work at remembering every day of our lives. This knowledge for me is grounded in God’s sure love for me.

We believe that each person is unique, special and to be loved because God has made us to be unique, special and loves us.

Reflect: What are the moments when you feel most unloved? God is with you.

You're everywhere! (7-12)

You are not only in me. You are not a private God. You are the God of the entire universe. You are in every place and therefore in every person. The whole human race is made by you.

This part of the psalm explores and tests the places where it is hardest to find God. It is easy to find God in the heavens or in familiar places or in the morning light.

But God is even in the hardest places. Sheol is the place of the dead. The sea is the symbol of chaos and danger. Darkness is the place of fear and ignorance. God is even here.

When we are in those places, when life is challenging or difficult, when we meet prejudice or cruelty or exclusion, God is with us to bring strength and comfort and order and peace. There is nowhere where God is not.

Reflect: Where are the places where you feel out of touch with God? God is there.

You made me! (13-18)

You made me! You **made** me! You made **me**!

Put the accent in different places and say the words with awe and wonder. It was you! You were there in my mother's womb. You knit me together. You formed me in the secret places.

Again, these are words that everyone can say. As we say them we can also remember the words from Genesis 1: "God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good" (31).

You and I are part of God's creation. People with different abilities and disabilities are part of God's good creation. Each is to be loved. Each has many gifts. All draw love from one another. All point to the grace of God individually and together.

It was you all along.

Reflect: What are the parts of you which you find most difficult to accept as wonderfully made?

Lead me Lord! (19-24)

All is not well in this world you have made. There is cruelty and hatred, violence and despair. Some of that comes from wicked people.

Help me to pray your kingdom come. Help me to use my gifts to build a better world. Help me to pray your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

But help me to go even further than this beautiful psalm. Help me not to hate and to overcome evil with good and to forgive, because that is the way of your beautiful Son, Jesus.

When hatred or cruelty are too hard to understand, help me still to love. Help me to remember where we began: that you know me and love me. Help me to be honest with you and with others.

Search my heart, O God, and lead me in the way everlasting. Amen.

Ability Sunday gives churches the opportunity to celebrate all God's people and all our gifts, as we recognise that we are all made in God's image.

For more information contact katie.tupling@oxford.anglican.org

Find resources on the Diocesan website:

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/mission-ministry/faith-in-action/disability/>