

Our Sovereign God

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[0 : 0 0] Well if we could this morning with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the book of Psalms and Psalm 139.

In the book of Psalms, Psalm 139, I want us to look at most of this Psalm but if we read again in verse 1 where David writes, Oh Lord you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

Do you know as we stand on the threshold of a new year in our lives there always comes with it an element of apprehension and none more so than this year because as we cross the threshold into a new year and into the unknown of 2021 we leave behind all that took place in 2020 and as you know a lot took place in 2020 but you know I stood here a year ago on the first of January 2020 and last New Year's Day we looked at a passage a passage which exhorted and encouraged us to enter 2020 with a 2020 vision for our congregation and our community and as you know any vision that we had for 2020 was completely shattered by the month of March because we all began living in lockdown we all started having to cope with COVID-19 and we all were being confronted and dealing with the reality of death but these things were never part of our 2020 vision because that's not what we proposed and planned and purposed to do in 2020 but now as we stand on the threshold of 2021 we look back and we can see that all that took place is exactly what the Lord proposed and planned and purposed to do in 2020.

It may not have been part of our 2020 vision but it was certainly always part of the Lord's 2020 vision because as our Bible reminds us his ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts for our God my friend our God is a sovereign God he's king and he's in control he declares and he decrees whatsoever comes to pass he rules over and over rules in every detail of our lives and you know that's what's emphasized here in Psalm 139 that our God is a sovereign God because despite all that's taken place in the year which has just passed we've been reminded of the fact that every detail of it has been completely out of our control.

[3 : 15] In fact all that took place in 2020 was out of the control of people and parliaments and even the powers of this world but none of it none of it was out of the care compassion and control of our sovereign God for throughout 2020 the Lord was speaking to us he was speaking to us as a congregation he was speaking to us as a community and he was speaking to us as a country and the Lord was reminding us that he's our sovereign God he's our sovereign God and you know at the beginning of a new year we're often nostalgic and sentimental we're often thoughtful and reflective about the year that has just passed and the year that's now before us and of course some people they approach 2021 with enthusiasm and excitement because this is the year that they hope to get married or or build a house or or have a child but you know for others as they approach 2021 they do so with anxiety and apprehension because they know that what's before them this year is the continued reality of old age and infirmity or the progression and deterioration of illness or even another year missing loved ones friends needless to say bringing in the new year it is happy for some but it's heartbreaking for others it's happy for some but heartbreaking for others so what do we do where do we go where do we go who do we turn to but to our sovereign God because the truth is my friend he knows exactly what 2021 holds for us therefore we must begin this new year by committing and commending ourselves into the hands of our sovereign God and Sam 139 it reminds us and reassures us that our sovereign God is omniscient omnipresent and omnipotent Sam 139 reminds us and reassures us that our sovereign God is omniscient omnipresent and omnipotent and there are three headings this morning our sovereign God is omniscient omnipresent and omnipotent so first of all he is omniscient he is omniscient look at verse one David writes oh lord you have searched me and known me you know when I sit down and when I rise up you discern my discern my thoughts from afar you search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways even before a word is on my tongue behold oh lord you know it all together you hem me in behind and before and lay your hand upon me such knowledge is too wonderful for me it is high I cannot attain it you know

Sam 139 it's a favorite Sam for many people because it's such a personal Sam because Sam 139 it reminds us and reassures us that our sovereign God not only knows us individually but he also knows us intimately and that's expressed to us by the fact that there are over 50 personal pronouns in this Sam over 50 times David the Samist he uses the expressions I, my and me in order to emphasize that this Sam is a personal Sam because our sovereign God God he is omniscient he's all knowing and he knows us personally he knows us privately he knows us particularly and so I want you to see that this Sam my friend is a personal Sam and it's a Sam that's speaking to you personally it's a personal Sam because Sam 139 was written from a personal perspective and I was written not only from a personal perspective but it was also written for you to remember and be reassured that your sovereign God is all knowing he's omniscient and he knows you he knows you personally he knows you privately and he knows you particularly and that's what's emphasized in the opening version verse one oh lord you have searched me and known me oh lord you have searched me and known me Sam 139 it opens with the confession that the

Lord the covenant king the one who keeps covenant with his people the one who is faithful to his promises he has searched you and known you and these words searched and known they're expressive because they describe exploration and examination they describe exploration and examination they describe in many ways a miner a miner who is digging deep into the heart of a mine in order to find his treasure and that's who your covenant king is my friend he has searched you and he has known you he has dug so deep into your heart that he knows everything there is to know about you he knows everything there is to know about you he has explored and examined you and he knows you intimately and intensely that you can say about him as it is in verse two you know when I sit down and when I rise up you discern my thoughts from afar you search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways my friend you can say oh lord my sovereign god you have searched me and you know me you have explored and examined me you know me personally you know me privately you know me particularly you know when I wake up and you know when I lie down you know when I go out and you know when I come home you know when I when I go to work you know when I come home from work you know every detail of my life you're acquainted with all my ways you know where I worship you know where I live you know what I do you know even when I'm wayward oh lord you have searched me and known me but the thing is he says you not only know my ways you also know my words because verse four even before a word is on my tongue he says behold oh lord you know it all together you hem me in behind and before and lay your hand upon you upon me you know I'm sure that we're all familiar with the concept of big brother and the tv show which locked people in the house in a house and put them under 24 hour scrutiny and surveillance where the cameras of big brother they all watched their every move and they watched where you would go and what you would do and they watched which room you walked into they they heard what you say they took note of your reactions and your mannerisms and your temperaments big brother sees all and knows all but you know Sam 139 it reminds us that our sovereign God he sees all he hears all and he knows all he knows even what we're thinking and he knows what we're going to say even before we say it verse four even before a word is on my tongue behold oh lord you know it all together and you know my friend the omniscience of our sovereign God it should bring conviction because there are times when we're wayward in our ways and the Lord knows it he knows when we're wayward in our ways he knows when we go to places we shouldn't go he knows when we keep the company we shouldn't keep he knows when we watch things we shouldn't watch he knows when we listen to things we shouldn't listen to but you know the Lord not only knows when we're wayward in our ways he also knows when we're wayward in our words because he knows when we need to tame the tongue he knows when we praise

God and karsh men he knows when we gossip and gallop about others he knows when we speculate and slander and smear someone be it our family our neighbor our work colleague our elder or our minister he knows when we're wayward in our words my friend the omniscience of our sovereign God it should remind us that we need to keep our Christian character conduct and conversation in check because the Lord knows when we're wayward in our ways and wayward in our words but you know the omniscience of God the omniscience of our sovereign God should not only bring conviction it should also bring comfort the omniscience of our sovereign God should bring conviction and comfort because despite searching and knowing us despite exploring and examining us despite personally privately and particularly being aware of all our faults our flaws and our failings you know the greatest comfort is that our sovereign God who is omniscient he loves us and he looks after us despite knowing everything about us the Lord has such a care and a concern and a compassion for us my friend our sovereign God he knows our name he knows our nature he knows our needs he even knows the number of hairs upon our head our life is like an open book before him where everything is highlighted and nothing is hidden because he knows our ways he knows our words he even knows our worries and you know this is what I find so comforting about the omniscience of our sovereign God because when we pray to him when we pray to him he not only knows what we're going to say before we say it he also knows what we would say even when we can't say it he knows what we would say even when we can't say it. You know what Paul reminds us in Romans chapter 8 that sometimes our prayers they don't even need words because when we're at our lowest and when we're at our weakest and when we feel most vulnerable and prayer seems impossible and maybe no one else knows what's going on in our heart maybe no one is aware of it and we feel completely lost for words and yet our sovereign God assures us that by his spirit he makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. My friend our sovereign God is omniscient and he reminds us and reassures us in his word that he knows all things and that he is working all things together for good to those who are the called according to his purpose.

You know it's no wonder David could say such knowledge is too strange for me too high to understand and so Psalm 139 reminds us and reassures us that our sovereign God is omniscient but secondly we see that Psalm 139 reminds us and reassures us that our sovereign God is omnipresent. Our sovereign God is omniscient and he's omnipresent. He's omnipresent look at verse 7. Where shall I go from your spirit or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven you are there.

[16 : 06] If I make my bed in the grave you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea even there your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me.

If I say surely the darkness shall cover me and the light about me be night even the darkness is not dark to you. The night is as bright as the day for darkness is as light with you. You know these verses that they remind us and reassure us that our sovereign God is everywhere. He's omnipresent. There's nowhere where our sovereign God is not because the thing is he's not restrained or restricted. He's not confined or contained. He's not bound or barred in any way because his presence is boundless. It's limitless. It's infinite. It's immeasurable. It's inexhaustible. He's omnipresent and the omnipresence of our sovereign God it's emphasized to us here by all these rhetorical questions that we see in verse seven. Where shall I go from your spirit or where shall

I flee from your presence? And the answer is there's nowhere. There's nowhere in time or in eternity where we can fly or flee from the presence of our sovereign God. He says if I ascend to heaven you are there. If I make my bed in the grave you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea you are there. And you know in these verses we're actually in verses eight and nine we're given all four points of the compass. We're given north, south, east and west. And he says if I ascend to heaven if I go north you are there. If I die and make my bed in the grave you are there. If I take the wings of the morning sun as it rises in the east you are there.

And if I dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea the Mediterranean sea which was to the west of Israel he says you are there. You are everywhere. Doesn't matter where I go you are there. You know my friend there's nowhere in time or in eternity where we can fly or flee from the presence of our sovereign God. And you know as we said earlier the omniscience of our sovereign God should bring conviction and comfort. And in a similar way the omnipresence of our sovereign God should bring conviction and comfort. The omnipresence of our sovereign God should bring conviction because there's nowhere in time or in eternity where we can fly or flee from his presence. And you know many have tried it but failed. When they sinned in the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve that they tried to run and hide from God but they failed. When he was called to preach to the people of Nineveh

Jonah he tried to run in the opposite direction. He ran away from God but he failed. When David committed adultery and murder he tried to run from God he tried to hide his sin but he failed.

[19 : 41] They all tried to run from the omnipresence of our sovereign God and they all failed. So my friend let's not think that will be any different to them.

In fact do you know my unconverted friend? Do you know the most solemn thing about the omnipresence of our sovereign God is that God is in hell. God is in hell. And I say this to you because if you were to die without Christ as your Lord and Savior this coming year then not even hell will separate you from him. Because you know hell is not the absence of God.

Hell is the presence of God. You know there was a book written a number of years ago by the American theologian Ligand Duncan and there was a book called Fear Not. And the book is it's an examination of death and it looks at death from a Christian perspective and what happens after death and what hell and heaven is like. And in the book Ligand Duncan he just describes the key difference between heaven and hell. He writes heaven is eternity in the presence of God with a mediator. Hell is eternity in the presence of God without a mediator.

Heaven is dwelling in the conscious awareness of your holy and righteous Father but doing so through a mediator who died in your place. The one who absorbed the fullness of the penalty of your sin. But hell he says. Hell is eternity in the presence of God being fully conscious of the just, holy, righteous, good, kind and loving Fathers disapproval of your rebellion and your wickedness. He says heaven is eternity in the immediate presence of God with Jesus. But hell is eternity in the immediate presence of God without Jesus. And you see my unconverted friend the difference between heaven and hell is Jesus because Jesus makes all the difference. And you know I can't stress this to you enough. I can't stress this the solemnity and the seriousness of this. And I urge you this morning at the beginning of a new year start this new year in the right way. Start this new year in the right way. Make this your new year's resolution.

Seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and ask the Lord to give you a new heart and a new beginning and to make you a new creation in Christ. Seek your sovereign God because my friend he's omnipresent and you will never run from him. You will never run from him. So don't run from him.

[23 : 01] Run to him. Don't flee from him. Flee to him. And you know his omnipresence it should not only bring conviction it should also bring comfort. And this is what's being emphasized in the Psalm that if we were to travel to any part of the world if we were to take any one of the four points of the compass if we were to travel north south east or west there's nowhere in time or even in eternity where we can fly or flee from the presence of our sovereign God. Because even if we were to go to the deepest and darkest parts of the sea or of space itself we're told in verse 10 even there your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me. My friend our comfort today is that wherever we may go and whatever events may unfold in our providence the Lord is there.

Always be assured of that the Lord is there even if we're confronted with the darkest of providences that cover and envelop and hide the light of God's presence even the darkness we're told in verses 11 and 12 even the darkness is as light to our sovereign God. He says if I say surely the darkness shall cover me and the light about me be night even the darkness is not dark to you the night is bright as the day for darkness is as light with you. You know there's such comforting words aren't they that even in the darkness of all that we go through in our lives whether it's the darkness of sin or the darkness of sickness or the darkness of suffering or even the darkness of sorrow even when we're in the darkness where we can't see the way ahead and we can't see the way forward and we can't see good coming out of this darkness and painful experience and yet my friend our sovereign God looks at the darkness of our providence and we're told it's as light to him.

It might seem like a cold dark night to us but it's a bright warm day to him. We might wonder what he's doing while we go through the depths of darkness and experience the feelings of depression and despair and despondency but like it was in the experience of job our sovereign God he knows the way that we take and when he has tried us we will come forth as gold.

My friend it's the omnipresence of our sovereign God which reminds us and reassures us of one of the greatest promises in scripture. I will never ever leave you and I will never ever forsake you.

Do you know when you read that version the English translations it just says I will never leave you and never forsake you. I will never leave you and never forsake you but when it was written originally in in Greek it had this huge emphasis upon it this huge promise behind it I will never ever leave you and I will never ever forsake you and is that not the promise of our Emmanuel that he is God with us he is God with us my friend rather than flee from him all flee to him flee to him come to him cast all your cares upon him because in him in Christ we have the assurance that there is no condemnation and there is no separation you know this is something we should be fully persuaded about when it comes to our sovereign God that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things in the present nor things to come in 2021 neither height nor depth nor any other creature nothing he says absolutely nothing is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[27 : 30] My friend our sovereign God he is omniscient he is omnipresent and he is omnipotent that's what we see lastly our sovereign God is omnipotent he's omnipotent now look at verse 13 for you formed my inward parts you knitted me together in my mother's womb I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made wonderful are your works my soul knows it very well my frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret intricately woven in the depths of the earth your eyes saw my unformed substance in your book were written every one of them the days that were formed for me when as yet there was none of them you know these verses they remind and reassure us that our sovereign God is all powerful he's omnipotent but you know when the psalmist considers the omnipotence of our sovereign God what's interesting is that he doesn't draw attention to the fact that our sovereign God created all things out of nothing visible and invisible and he created them in the six in the space of six days and all very good he doesn't highlight that in the beginning in the genesis of this world our sovereign God spoke into the dark recesses of this world and said let there be light he doesn't say that he doesn't mention the creative omnipotence of our sovereign God when he called this whole world into being by the word of his power he doesn't mention that he doesn't refer to the fact that our sovereign God perfectly ordered the creation he ordered the sun the moon the stars the planets the solar system he ordered it all the psalmist doesn't highlight the even the fact that he formed the land and the seas the hills and the valleys the mountains and the oceans the rivers and the forests the psalmist doesn't tell us about how our sovereign God filled the earth with trees and plants and animals and mammals and birds of the air and fish of the sea and all the creepy crawlies and insects he doesn't speak about our sovereign God and how he ordered all the times and seasons the sunrises and the sunsets the wind and the waves he doesn't even talk about the days and the weeks and the months and the years and the decades and the centuries and the millennia which he has ordered and he's ordered every detail in the vastness of this creation and he's ordained it all from before the foundation of the world and yet the psalmist we see here the psalmist doesn't mention any of that doesn't say anything about that in order to draw our attention to the omnipotence of our sovereign God instead he says to us and this I think is wonderful he says you don't even need to look around you to know that your sovereign God is omnipotent all you need to do is take a look at yourself all you need to do is take a look at yourself do you know as we said Psalm 139 it's a personal Psalm and in these verses we're reminded and we assure that our sovereign God is omnipotent he's all powerful and yet he deals with us so personally so privately and so particularly because our sovereign God he not only knows everything about us but he knew us and he saw us when our frame was being formed in our mother's womb he knew us and saw us in our most primitive and private beginning even before an ultrasound could

pick up our substance our sovereign God knew us and saw us we were hidden out of sight and yet we were being made in secret we were being fearfully and wonderfully created and yet our sovereign God he knew us and he saw us and he appointed every day in our lives for us that's what we're told in verse 16 your eyes saw my unformed substance in your book were written every one of them the days that were formed for me when as yet there were none of them my friend our sovereign God weaves us in the womb and he weaves us in the world our sovereign God weaves us in the womb and he weaves us in the world because like a weaver sitting at his loom our sovereign God he has in mind what the end product is going to look like and with all his threads he pulls them all together and he weaves them all together and he weaves them in time and in tune we were woven so intricately and carefully in our mother's womb we were formed and fashioned so uniquely so beautifully so fearfully and wonderfully we were made in the image and likeness of our sovereign God and because we bear his image we're precious to him we're precious to God and our life is precious to God in fact every day of our lives is precious to God that's why our sovereign God weaves us in the womb and weaves us in the world our sovereign God has planned every thread of providence and he has woven each one of them into the tapestry of our lives and the marvel of who our sovereign God is is that with him there are no mistakes there are no mishaps there are no loose threads every thread that goes into the tapestry is accounted for we might not understand why he has woven this thread of providence into our experience but he does because he's the divine weaver and my friend he knows what he's doing he knows what he's doing even in our hardest of circumstances and the most testing of trials he knows what he's doing and my friend you know that you're in safe hands when you're in the hands of the divine weaver because he's still weaving all these these threads of providence on his loom and he'll still keep weaving as you go into 2021 he'll weave all these threads of providence into your life it's I know why everyone loves that poem about the divine weaver but it says my life is butter weaving between my lord and me I cannot choose the color he worketh steadily of times he weaves sorrow and I in foolish pride forget that he sees the upper and I the underside but not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly shall God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why the dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skillful hand as the threads of gold and silver in the pattern he has planned my friend there may be threads of providence that have been woven into the tapestry of your life and you may never know why maybe not until you leave this world but your greatest comfort is that your sovereign God knows you he knows you and he knows what he's

doing and if our sovereign God has seen you and knows you and he knows all your days then why wouldn't you trust him with all your heart why won't you trust him with all your heart you know what's all of them and said if you want to be wise if you want to be wise at Solomon trust in the Lord with all your heart do not lean upon your own understanding but in all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your path friends bringing in the new year it is happy for some but it's heartbreaking for others and this morning we're being urged to look away from ourselves we need to look up we need to look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen for the things that are seen my friend they are only temporal but the things that are unseen they are eternal we're to look to the unseen God our sovereign God because he is omniscient he is omnipresent he is omnipotent he knows what 2021 holds for us therefore we must begin our year by committing and commending ourselves into the hands of our sovereign God for both time and for eternity. May the Lord bless that these thoughts to us and let us pray together.

Oh Lord our gracious God we give thanks for that wonderful reminder that we have a sovereign God who is sovereign over every detail in our lives we give thanks that every day has been foreordained that it has all been planned and purposed by thee and help us then we pray to walk in thy will and to follow thy way and to stay close to thy word not only the word that has been written but that the word who became flesh and dwelt among us that we would continue to behold his glory as we go as we go into a new year oh Lord watch over us we pray guard our steps guard our hearts and our minds keep the evil one from us and remind us day by day that our God is omniscient our God is omnipresent our God is omnipotent oh Lord the omnipotent God he reigns and we give thanks to thee for that bless us then we pray as we commit ourselves into thy hand that ours watch over us and keep us and go before us in all things for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake amen well we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing the words of

Psalm 139 Psalm 139 just the Psalm we were looking at this morning we're considering the words of the sing sam's version Psalm 139 and we'll sing verses 1 to 10 oh Lord you have examined me you know me through and through my sitting rising all my thoughts afar are known to you my going out and lying down are plain before your view before I speak a word oh Lord it is well known to you down to the verse mark 10 of Psalm 139 to God's praise oh hey my Before I see how far the Lord is his fellow to you.

[40 : 56] You have been behind before, you lay on the ground, such knowledge is too wonderful to hide, to understand.

Where from your spirit lean, are from your presence go?

It's a human effort to argue, or in the death deal.

Am I to take the wings of God and well beyond the sea?

There also you would be my life, you write and hold in me.