Psalm 139: The Theology of Life, Part I

Brandon Phillips

Psalm 139 / Abortion; Life / Psalm 139
In Psalm 139:7-12, King David meditates on the first of four massive truths about the God of Creation. You serve a God who Is Omniscient (All-Knowing).

Pre-sermon Comments

> Genesis 8:22 (LSB) [22] "While all the days of the earth *remain*, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease."

Discussion Questions

The upcoming election is mentioned, particularly the contentious issue of the sanctity of life. Why do you think the sanctity of life is such a pivotal issue in both politics and theology? How can Christians navigate this conversation with grace and truth?

The pastor says that voting is a biblical responsibility. What biblical principles guide your decisions when approaching an election? How can we apply those principles to the sanctity of life debate?

As the pastor begins a series on Psalm 139, what expectations or thoughts do you have regarding how this passage addresses the sanctity of life? How does Psalm 139 shape our understanding of the value of human life from a biblical perspective?

The pastor mentions the sound of children in the church as a reminder of Jesus's love for all children. How can our church practically demonstrate a commitment to the sanctity of life in our ministries and daily interactions?

How can you prepare your heart to listen and respond in a godly way during this sermon series? What role does prayer play in shaping your understanding of challenging topics like the sanctity of life?

Series Introduction

The Current Cultural Moment

> Ezekiel 33:1–6 (LSB) [1] And the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, [2] "Son of man, speak to the sons of your people and say to them, 'If I bring a sword upon a land, and the people of the land take one man from among them and make him their watchman, [3] and he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows on the trumpet and warns the people, [4] then he who hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his *own* head. [5] 'He heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning; his blood will be on himself. But had he taken warning, he would have escaped with his life. [6] 'But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman's hand.'

How abortion became a political hot potato

"While the deep concern of a woman bearing an unwanted child merits consideration and sympathy, it is my personal feeling that the legalization of abortion on demand is not in accordance with the value which our civilization places on human life. Wanted or unwanted, I believe that human life, even at its earliest stages, has certain rights which must be recognized—the right to be born, the right to love, the right to grow old…Once life has begun, no matter at what stage of growth, it is my belief that termination should not be decided merely by desire." ~ Teddy Kennedy (1971)

But that all changed in the early '70s, when Democratic politicians first figured out that the powerful abortion lobby could fill their campaign coffers (and attract new liberal voters). Politicians also began to realize that, despite the Catholic Church's teachings to the contrary, its bishops and priests had ended their public role of

responding negatively to those who promoted a pro-choice agenda. ~ Anne Hendershott

> By convincing the Kennedy scions that it was moral to support abortion, these liberal priests had a tremendous impact on American politics: The Kennedys led the way for *other* public Catholics to claim that there was no contradiction between their professed Catholicism and their support for legal abortion. This came as welcome news to many politicians, as the Democrats became aware that the abortion lobby was willing to sink a lot of cash behind candidates that would serve their interests—and that even pro-life Catholic priests and bishops were increasingly withdrawing from the public culture wars, thus decreasing the chance that they would come out and publicly condemn a pro-abortion Catholic Democrat. ~ Jonathon Van Maren

Roe v. Wade and the Oral Contraceptives

Roe v. Wade

Margaret Sanger and "The Pill"

> Margaret Sanger: Given Birth Control, the unfit will voluntarily eliminate their kind. On the other hand Birth Control will permit large numbers of intelligent women, such as our teachers and nurses, to enter upon marriage, in the knowledge that they can limit their families to their economic conditions. While these women would probably not have large families of children, nevertheless those that they give to the world will be of rare value and will assist materially in the improvement of the race stock.

The Dobbs decision of 2022

> We hold that Roe and Casey must be overruled. The Constitution makes no reference to abortion, and no such right is implicitly protected by any constitutional provision, including the one on which the defenders of Roe and Casey now chiefly rely—the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. **~ Samuel Alito**

I am thankful that Roe v. Wade may be overturned - I am hopeful! But, we cannot place our hope in the political process! Truly, things may actually get much

worse! We must recognize that overturning Roe will not change human hearts. We must understand that women and men who are dead in the trespasses and sins need the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They need to be forgiven and reconciled to a holy God! ~ Brandon Phillips (May 15, 2022)

Abortion Today

1. Pray for the states - this decision will put the question back to the states. Pray that each state including Florida makes the righteous decision. ~ Brandon Phillips (May 15, 2022)
2. Pray against the states that will embrace the murder of babies. My fear is that these states will become destinations for parents to kill their babies. Knowing the sinfulness of man, some states may allow even more freedom to kill. I can see these states forming support industries to bring women in for this purpose. I can even see the situation becoming much worse in certain places. Pray that God would thwart any evil intentions that may be being formulated now. ~ Brandon Phillips (May 15, 2022)

> According to Ballotpedia: The initiative would provide a constitutional right to abortion before viability or when "necessary to protect the patient's health, as determined by the patient's healthcare provider."

A Culture of Death

Discussion Questions

In what ways can the church address political issues like abortion while keeping the focus on the gospel and the sanctity of life?

Pastor Brandon emphasizes that abortion is a biblical and theological issue, not merely political. How do we explain and defend the sanctity of life in conversations with those who may view abortion solely as a political matter? Reflect on Psalm 139 and discuss how the passage affirms the value of human life. How can this scripture inform our response to current political debates surrounding life issues?

The sermon critiques both political parties for their failures regarding the sanctity of life. How should Christians engage in a culture that increasingly devalues life, whether through abortion or other social issues?

What can we learn from the examples of politicians who changed their views on abortion (like Teddy Kennedy) about the dangers of prioritizing power over principle?

Series Proposition and Outline

In Psalm 139, King David meditates on four massive truths about the God of Creation.

According to David, you serve a God:

- **Who Is Omniscient (All-Knowing) – Ps 139:1-6**
- Who Is Omnipresent (All-Present) – Ps 139: 7-12
- Who Is Omnipotent (All-Powerful) – Ps 139:13-18
- Who Is Worthy of our Obeisance (All-Holy) – Ps 139:19-24

Sermon Text

> Psalm 139:1–6 (LSB) [1] O Yahweh, You have searched me and known *me*. [2] You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. [3] You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. [4] Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Yahweh, You know it all. [5] You have enclosed me behind and before, And You have put Your hand upon me. [6] *Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is *too* high, I cannot attain to it.

Sermon Outline

Sermon 1 Outline

In Psalm 139:1-6, King David meditates on the first of four massive truths about the God of Creation. According to David:

1. **You serve a God who Is Omniscient (All-Knowing) – Ps 139:1-6**
    a. **He knows your paths – Ps 139:1-2**
    b. **He knows your practices – Ps 139:3-4**
    c. **He knows your personality – Ps 139:5-6**

You serve a God who Is Omniscient (All-Knowing) – Ps 139:1-6

He knows your paths – Ps 139:1-2

> Psalm 139:1–2 (LSB) [1] O Yahweh, You have searched me and known *me*. [2] You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar.

Yahweh - God's Covenant Name

The meaning and implication of His Name - Yahweh - is Gods self-deriving, ongoing, and never-ending existence. The effect of revealing God's name is His distinction from other gods and His expression of intimacy with His people. ~ LSB Translation Committee

> Genesis 1:1 (LSB) [1] In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
>
> Exodus 34:6 (LSB) [6] Then Yahweh passed by in front of him and called out, "Yahweh, **Yahweh God**, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

Yahweh knows us intimately!

> Psalm 139:1 (LSB) [1] O Yahweh, You have searched me and known *me*.

Yahweh's Knowledge is Constant Intimate!

> Psalm 139:2 (LSB) [2] You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar.
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> Hebrews 4:13 (LSB) [13] And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are uncovered and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we have an account *to give*.
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> There is not a desire that arises in thy soul, but the Lord takes notice of it. ~ **Thomas Brooks**
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> **As a Christian is never out of the reach of God's hand, so he is never out of the view of God's eye. ~ Thomas Brooks**

He knows your practices – Ps 139:3-4

> Psalm 139:3 (LSB) [3] You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

God's Middle Knowledge?

> Psalm 139:4 (LSB) [4] Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Yahweh, You know it all.

What about "man's free will"?

> Ephesians 2:1–2 (LSB) [1] And you were dead in your transgressions and sins, [2] in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience,
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> **"Our will is in bondage to sin and evil unless it is liberated by God's grace."**— Martin Luther - *The Bondage of the Will* (1525)

"Man is so completely overwhelmed as with a deluge, that no part is free from sin, and therefore whatever proceeds from him is accounted sin." ~ John Calvin

"The will of man is in bondage to sin and cannot choose righteousness until it is freed by the grace of God."— John Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book II, Chapter 2

He knows your personality – Ps 139:5-6

> Psalm 139:5 (LSB) [5] You have enclosed me behind and before, And You have put Your hand upon me.
>
> Psalm 139:5 (ESV) [5] You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

His ways are higher than our ways!

> Psalm 139:6 (LSB) [6] *Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is *too* high, I cannot attain to it.
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> Isaiah 55:9–11 (LSB) [9] "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. [10] "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, [11] So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what pleases Me, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.

Conclusion

> Deuteronomy 32:3–4 (LSB) [3] "For I proclaim the name of Yahweh; Ascribe greatness to our God! [4] "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.
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> **"God knows me" is different from "God is omniscient"; the latter is a mere theological statement; the former is a child of God's most precious possession. ~ Oswald Chambers (Lecturer and Missionary)**
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> Psalm 139:13–15 (LSB) [13] For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. [14] I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. [15] My frame

was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, *And* intricately woven in the depths of the earth;

Ephesians 1:3–4 (LSB) [3] Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, [4] just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love,

Isaiah 61:3 (LSB) [3] To grant those who mourn *in* Zion, Giving them a headdress instead of ashes, The oil of rejoicing instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of Yahweh, that He may show forth His beautiful glory.

John 3:16 (LSB) [16] "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Exodus 34:7 (LSB) [7] who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

Discussion Questions

In Psalm 139:1-2, David acknowledges that Yahweh has searched and known him. How does the idea that God knows you intimately impact your relationship with Him?

Reflect on the statement, "God knows your paths, your practices, and your personality." What areas of your life do you find most comforting or challenging in light of God's complete knowledge of you?

How does God's knowledge of us before we even speak (Psalm 139:4) challenge the way we approach prayer and our relationship with Him?

David concludes that God's knowledge is "too wonderful" to fully comprehend (Psalm 139:6). How do you reconcile the mystery of God's infinite knowledge and power with your own limited understanding?

The sermon touches on the issue of abortion and God's intimate knowledge of every human life. How should believers respond to a culture that often devalues life, while maintaining an attitude of grace and hope toward those who seek forgiveness for their past sins?

The Gospel

God

Created and owns everything

Gen 1:1—In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth

Psalm 24:1—The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it.

Is Perfectly Holy

1 John 1:5—This is the message we heard from Him and announce to you that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.

Matt 5:48—Therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Requires perfect obedience to His Law

James 2:10—for whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

Man

Has broken God's law

Rom 3:10,23—there is none righteous, not even one…for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Will pay the eternal penalty for his sin

Rom. 6:23—For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord

Cannot save himself by his good works

Titus 3:5—He saved us not based on works which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

Christ

Came to earth both as God and sinless man

Col 2:9—For in Him the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form

Demonstrated God's love by dying on the cross to pay sin's penalty

Rom 5:8—But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us

2 Cor 5:21—He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Rose from the grave and is alive today

1 Cor 15:4—And that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

Sinners

Must repent of all that dishonors God

Isa 55:7—Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

Luke 9:23—if anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take us his cross daily and follow Me.

Must believe in Christ as Lord and Savior

Rom 10:9—that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

Will you repent and believe in Christ?

Acts 17:30—therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance God is declaring to men that all everywhere should repent.

Don't hesitate to contact Pastor Brandon or Pastor Keith if you have any questions about this sermon or if you would like to know how to follow Christ.

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Upcoming Sermons in this series

Sermon 2 Outline

In Psalm 139:7-12, King David meditates on the second of four massive truths about the God of Creation. According to David:

1. You serve a God Who Is Omnipresent (All-Present) – Ps 139: 7-12
    a. He pursues you to the heights and depths – Ps 139:7-8
    b. He is present in your pilgrimage – Ps 139:9-10
    c. He perceives you through the perceived darkness – Ps 139:11-12 -

Sermon 3 Outline

In Psalm 139:13-18, King David meditates on the third of four massive truths about the God of Creation. According to David:

You serve a God who Is Omnipotent (All-Powerful) – Ps 139:13-18

a. You were fashioned with care (Ps 139:13)
b. You were formed with intricacy (Ps 139:14-16)
c. You were fitted for intimacy (Ps 139:17-18)

Sermon 4 Outline

In Psalm 139:7-12, King David meditates on the fourth and final massive truth about the God of Creation. According to David:

You serve a God who Is Worthy of our Obeisance (All-Holy) – Ps 139:19-24

a. He is sovereign over sinners – Ps 139:19-20
b. He expects us to stand against wickedness – Ps 139:21-22
c. He expects us to submit to His scrutiny – Ps 139:23-24

Additional Quotes for this series

> The omniscience of God is a wonder. The omnipotence of God is a wonder. God's spotless holiness is a wonder. None of these things can we understand. But the greatest wonder of all is *the mercy of God*. ~ **Andrew Murray**
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> In an ultimate and absolute sense you and I simply cannot reconcile God's omniscience and foreknowledge and sovereignty with this fact of prayer that we find so clearly taught in Scripture. ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Preacher and Writer)**
>
> God's omniscience, which in the previous section has been attributed to his omnipresence, is now attributed to his omnipotence. God can search man out not only because he sees him, but because he made him. ~ **James Montgomery Boice**
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> The omniscience of God combines with his veracity to guarantee the truth of everything he tells us. ~ **Millard J. Erickson**
>
> In fact, an implication of God's omniscience is that the future is determined. God knows the future exhaustively because he has decreed the future exhaustively. ~ **Michael Horton**
>
> For an unsaved person this powerful, pervasive knowledge seems intrusive and frightening, and with good reason. God is the end-time judge with whom we must reckon. Strikingly, the response of the psalmist is not fear. He is not trembling when he thinks of God's omniscience. On the contrary, he shelters himself in God's knowledge and marvels at it. For the psalmist, God's knowledge is not a threat; it is a refuge. ~ **James Montgomery Boice**

God's omnipotence (his power to do anything he chooses to do) is intimately connected with some of God's other characteristics, some of God's other "omni" characteristics: omnipotence, all power; omniscience, all knowledge; omnipresence, presence everywhere. ~ **D. A. Carson**

God's omniscience is a truth fraught with much comfort. ~ **Arthur Walkington Pink**

Objections to the biblical doctrine of God's exhaustive omniscience are at root philosophical and not exegetical. Moreover, they are *vain* philosophy, refusing to learn the lesson which God intended—*i.e.* that men should fear before Him. ~ **Douglas Wilson**

Is it not clear that God foreknows what will be because he has decreed what shall be? God's foreknowledge is not the cause of events, rather are events the effects of his eternal purpose. ~ **Arthur Walkington Pink**

God's omniscience is a necessary condition for complete sovereignty, for if God does not know for sure everything that will happen in advance, then He cannot be sure how free creatures will use their free will. ~ **Norman Geisler**

God's omniscience is his perfect knowing of himself, all actual things outside himself, and all things that do not become reality in one eternal and simple (not having any parts but having distinctions) act (exertion of energy) ~ **John F. MacArthur; Richard Mayhue**

A theology that is all of the head is cold, dry, barren, and of little practical value. A theology that is all heart may be warm, comforting, and practical, but it will lack substance, and because it does it will be subject to every theological fad that comes along and will not hold up in hard times. Psalm 139 has both head and heart. It is strongly theological, dealing with such important doctrines as God's omniscience (it is probably the weightiest part of the Bible for discussing God's omniscience), omnipresence, and omnipotence; but it is also wonderfully personal, because it speaks of these attributes of God in ways that impact the psalmist and ourselves. ~ **James Montgomery Boice**

Suppose for a moment that Jehovah could not see the works and know the thoughts of man. Would you then become more careless concerning him than you are now? I think not. In nine cases out of ten, and perhaps in a far larger and sadder proportion, the doctrine of divine omniscience, although it is believed, has no practical effect on our lives at all. The mass of mankind forget God. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

Perhaps this is the most astounding fact about God's omniscience: He knows *every* detail about us, yet He still loves us. ~ **John F. MacArthur**

Omniscience cannot be separated from omnipotence. ~ **Matthew Henry (Nonconformist Biblical Exegete)**

His omniscience provides the knowledge for His wise choices; His omnibenevolence assures that they will be good choices; and His omnipotence enables Him to achieve His ends by the means He chooses. ~ **Norman Geisler**

This speaks of the omniscience of God. He knows you. ~ **J. Vernon McGee**

We must remember that we are not only to live in the fear of the Lord, but we are to live in the comfort and the knowledge of God. He not only sees what is happening to you when you are taken ill, He not only knows when you are suffering bereavement and sorrow, He knows every pang of the heart, He knows every heartache; He knows everything; there is nothing outside His omniscience. He knows all about us in every respect and He therefore knows our every need. From that our Lord draws this deduction. You need never be anxious, you must never be worried. God is with you in this state, you are not alone, and He is your Father. Even an earthly father does this in a measure. He is with his child, protecting, doing everything he can for him. Multiply that by infinity, and that is what God is doing with respect to you, whatever your circumstance. ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Preacher and Writer)**

A great Christian of nearly 300 years ago, Nicholas Herman of Lorraine said that in his early Christian life he determined to cut through the tangle of religious means and "nourish his heart on high thoughts of God." I have always treasured that expression.

> A cultivation of God through prayer, humble soul-searching and avid feasting upon the Scriptures would go far to awaken the church. ~ **A. W. Tozer**
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> In our desire after God let us keep always in mind that God also has desire, and His desire is toward the sons of men, and more particularly toward those sons of men who will make the once-for-all decision to exalt Him over all. Such as these are precious to God above all treasures of earth or sea. In them God finds a theater where He can display His exceeding kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. With them God can walk unhindered; toward them He can act like the God He is. ~ **A. W. Tozer**
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> Christians, and especially very active ones, should take time out frequently to search their souls to be sure of their motives. Many a solo is sung to show off; many a sermon is preached as an exhibition of talent; many a church is founded as a slap at some other church. Even missionary activity may become competitive, and soul winning may degenerate into a sort of brush-salesman project to satisfy the flesh. Do not forget, the Pharisees were great missionaries and would compass sea and land to make a convert. ~ **A. W. Tozer**