



## St John Lutheran Church

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### Psalm 139

#### Funeral Sermon for Don Sleizer

**All of life** is a conflict. **And the worst** of that conflict takes place within one's self. **We want to** know many things. **But the one** thing we are fearful of knowing is exactly **who and what we are**. **That's the theme** that underlies Psalm 139.

**We are very** willing to know all about other people. **We are willing** to know who made a fool of himself at the VFW last week. **Or who was** picked up for DUI. **Or whose child** was arrested for shoplifting. **Or whose husband** or wife is involved in an affair. **We welcome that** kind of knowledge. **We welcome it** so long as we are **not the fool... or the drunk...**

**or the shoplifter... or the adulterer.**

**You see, man** does not want to know himself. **He is afraid** to know himself. **He hides his** deeds in darkness. **He hides his** thoughts in silence. **He hides his** words in anonymous gossip. **He hides himself** behind masks. **Yes, man is** willing to know ... **but very unwilling** to be known.

**The Psalmist contemplates** this with an extended meditation on God's knowledge of us. **Not of God's** knowledge in general... **but God's knowledge of US**. **Indeed, God's knowledge** of him... **the one** individual at the center of his own life. **The psalmist could** have stated the matter quite simply. **He could have** said, "**God's knowledge of us is complete.**" **The Psalmist could** have said that... **but he doesn't.**

**Instead he says** this: "**Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thoughts from afar. You encompass my paths and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. A word is not yet on my tongue, but you know it already.**"

**Guided by the Holy Spirit...please understand** what the Psalmist has done. **Instead of using** one verb to describe God's knowledge of the heart... **the Psalmist uses** six. **He's making a point**. **And the point** is that God knows us... **completely... absolutely... totally ... finally.**

**And just in** case we don't get the point the psalmist gives us more. "**If I ascend to heaven (up!), You are there. If I make my bed in the netherworld (down!), behold You are there. If I take the wings of the morning (east!) and dwell at the uttermost parts of the sea (west!), even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand hold me.**" **You see, whether** within ourselves, or without ... **we are known. We are seen. We are comprehended. As if in a spotlight... we are constantly an open book to God.**

**That, my friends,** is fearful. **It is fearful** because we are fearful. **We often frighten** ourselves. **We are frightened** by the evil that come into our minds and out of our mouths. **We are frightened** by the things we sometimes do. **We try to** hide ourselves in pretense. **We put on** a false face so that people will not see us as we actually are. **We do that** because we know what would happen if we were known as we truly are.

**We know that** our friends would disown us. **They would flee** from us with shocked cries of horror. **We would be deserted ... and justly so. Understand this... and you** are at the beginning of wisdom. **Fail to**

**understand this... and you** will fail to ever understand the true, hideous

nature of sin.

**But back to** the psalmist. **After 17 verses** he has finally come to the end

of his description of God's knowledge of us. **He has turned** that truth over and over in his mind... **and looked** at it from every possible angle.

**And what is** his conclusion? **Verse 18. "I awake, and I am still with You." Or turn the sentence around. Turn it around** and it becomes even more powerful. **"I awake and ...You are still with me." What no human** could ever accept... **God does. What no friend** would ever put up with... **God does. What no neighbor** would ever acknowledge... **God does. God accepts us. No, that's isn't** good enough. **It's much more** than that because... **God accepts you. He puts up** with you. **He acknowledges you.**

**On Friday** of the first week in history ... **the sixth** day of creation... **to use** the Biblical language ... **on that** day the first Adam was created. **He was created** in the image of God ... **and yet,** he sinned. **Very promptly and**

easily **he sinned. So much for** that 'wonderful' thing we call **"free will."** **Free will killed** Adam and Eve and it is killing us as well!

**And sin has** been what the sons of Adam ... **you and me ... that's what** we've been doing ever since. **But on another** Friday, Jesus ... **the Second** Adam ... **took the** first Adam's place before the righteous judgment of God... **then and** there Jesus offered Himself in the place of the first Adam. **What was created** on a Friday ... **man ... was redeemed** on a Friday ... **the Friday we call "Good."**

**What rightly belonged** to you ...**that is your sin ...this sin** was lifted from you and draped over the One Who knew no sin. **And in what** Martin Luther called the **"glorious exchange"** ... **what rightfully** belonged to Jesus ...**that being** His righteousness and holiness ... **this, was** given to you. **Forgiveness has come** to you as pure gift. **On the cross** your sins died. **And in the** Resurrection of Jesus... **your righteousness** came to life.

**Does God know you? Absolutely!! Did God know** Don Sleizer? **Totally and absolutely. That is in fact why we are here today! And what was** it that God knew about Don? **What is it** that God knows about you? **He knows your sins. And He also** knows that your sins have been atoned for ...**paid up** in full ...**by the sacrifice** of Jesus.

**And what is** it that God sees when He looks at you? **If you are Christian... He sees Jesus. Don Sleizer** was baptized into the death of Christ. **That's what St. Paul** says. **And so have** all of you who have been baptized...**Now when God** looks at you...He sees the glorious righteousness of His Son! **If you are not Christian...if you have not been baptized...you stand naked and alone with no place to hide from a righteous and holy God!**

**What does that** mean? **It means that** when you are Christian...**you have** been hidden in Christ. **When God now** looks for you He does not see you apart from the death ... **the crucifixion ... of Jesus. That's what** makes the crucifix so important to Lutherans. **A crucifix shows** us our atonement... **our redemption... our rescue. A crucifix shows** us our hiding place ... **our hiding** place in the wounds of Jesus.

**Please note carefully** the closing words of our Psalm. **"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."** **That, dear friends, is the confession of the Christian faith. That is the** confession of a Christian who knows himself to be a sinner. **"Search me." "Know me." "Try me."**

**Why? So that You** may forgive me... **re-create me... re-new me ... lead me.** The prayer of the Christian is always very simple. **Always simple. Always direct.** **"Lord, have mercy on me! Take from me what is mine. Take my sin, and give me Jesus. Give me His righteousness."**

**And then? And then "lead me in the way everlasting."** **That's the way** it has always been for Christians. **That's the way** it was for Don. **May that also** be the way it is for you... **dear friends. Don Sleizer believed** this and he trusted in this all of his long life.

**Anyone who knew** Don would come to the very quick conclusion that he was a no nonsense kind of guy. **Don Sleizer was** very direct...**and if** he did not like something he had no problem expressing his views. **This cut both ways... it was no** secret of which things and what people he approved of... **of the** things that he cared about and the people he cared about! **With Don...what you** see is what you got and often times...**his actions** spoke volumes about what he was thinking!

**And so in** his very direct way... **Don** came to this Church. **Week in and** week out...**year after year... Don Sleizer** came to this place to worship his God...**His Lord** and Savior. **For those who** gathered here with him...**those who** are his brothers and sisters in the faith...**this was** no surprise for they came for the same reason Don came to this place established by God.

**Don came here to receive God's** comfort and to praise God's Name for all that He did for us in His Son. **Don's life of** faith was rich and lead by the Spirit living within him... **it was** unfailing! **Year after year, as Don** heard God's Word...**as he** constantly received the Lord's Supper...**his faith** was increased by God...**his trust** in God increased...**the importance** of worship in his life increased. **This became especially** true as his health began to fail.

**Through it all ...God knew** Don Sleizer and He made Himself known to Don. **Through it all** Don received the comfort and the peace of knowing that he had nothing to fear from His God...**that His** God knew him and loved him and that because of Jesus Christ...**Don knew** he would live forever face to face as God first intended! **This was** Don Sleizer's confession of faith...**and like** the Psalmist Don's expectation and hope is that his Lord would lead him to the way everlasting...**and so** it is...**Don's faith** is realized...**his hope** and comfort are now the fullness of his existence. **The very existence** that our Lord and God wants for all people...**those who** are called according to His purpose. **This is our** comfort today as we lay our brother to rest...**this is** what his example and his life of faith was all about. **This is what** Don would have you know today... **that Jesus** is his Lord and that in Christ there is no fear...**no pain...no sadness** and no tears!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

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