

The 139th Psalm is an amazing celebration of being known by God. The writer has understood one of the most profound lessons of being a human. That we are known and loved by the Heart of the Universe. That God knows everything about us, even things we may not know ourselves AND God still cares for us and loves us and surrounds us with grace and love. One of my favorite phrases in this scripture comes in the middle where the writer declares “I am Fearfully and Wonderfully Made.” I want to pause just a moment to say that word fearfully is not the best translation of the Hebrew word which really has a nuance here about revering or to be in reverence of something. A better translation is found in the Complete Jewish Bible which says: “I thank you because I am awesomely made, wonderfully; your works are wonders — I know this very well.” The King James Version translators if they kept with this idea of reverence and awe would have said “I am awe-fully (awfully) and wonderfully made.” Which would have sounded the exact opposite of what they wanted, so they went with fearfully, and written in the time of Kings and being commissioned by the King to translate, the word “fear” was not discouraged as fear was a tool often used to rule a Kingdom. Let us look at these two words ideas being awesomely and wonderfully made.

First the word awesome. The idea that we are - that you individually are a marvelous and awe-inspiring being. When I was in college at Kent State University in Ohio, I had a Geology Professor named, Glenn Frank. I later found out Professor Frank had been instrumental in calming things after the shooting of students on May 4th 1970. And he is credited with prevent further deaths and injuries. But that day in my Freshman year I was unaware of this part of him, but noticed how he answered a question. A Student asked Dr. Frank whether he thought there was some kind of Creative Being in the Universe or everything just started randomly. Professor Frank

held up his hand, and said, "When I look at this - the human hand- with it's almost limitless capacity, It is hard for me to imagine it could have been designed by anything but a vastly Higher intelligence." Dr. Frank was in awe of just this one part of the human body. Look at your own hand now. It is a marvelous thing. This palm and four fingers and the most amazing feature: the opposable thumb allow us to do so many things. Picking fruit or vegetables and bringing them to our mouths. Our hands literally provide our nourishment. They even can form cups to bring life sustaining water to our mouths. The fine motor of the hand can bring music to life on a piano or organ or violin or trumpet. That is after those hands have fashioned those instruments - probably from raw materials that were gathered with hands, whether pulling a saw or using hands to drive a truck full of lumber. These same hands caress and massage loved ones with tenderness and love. The martial artists also show us that a hand can configure itself as a weapon of self-defense in many ways.

And what about communication. Some of us can't really speak without our hands. Especially when we are passionate about our topic. They even help us communicate emotion, like when we clap our hands in appreciation or put a hand on someone's shoulder to show empathy and care. Marge Hooie would remind us that the deaf community uses their hands extensively in American Sign Language. What have you done today with your hands? It would be a great exercise to remember a time when one or both hands were immobilized, and recount what we could not do.

The hands are only one part of an amazingly complex and agile physical, chemical, spiritual, emotional, vibrant and dynamic being which is you. You are amazing. You are awesome! You are incredible with almost limitless potential. We forget that some times. And if some of you like me suffer from having grown up thinking saying something like that would be boasting, let me remind you that we did not make ourselves. We can't take credit. The Psalmist rightly reminds us that God

is the one that fashioned and wove together this amazing creature. So it is good to revere and hold in awe who we are.

But we are not just Awesomely made, we are wonderfully made. I think the Psalmist wonders most about God's care for us and thoughts about us. The Psalmist is filled with wonder when they realize God is like a parent who upon spying their child asleep; remembers the things that the child did that day and cherishes the smiles, and also has concern about the struggles the child faced. And unlike human parents, God never needs sleep of God's own. The amazing thing is that God does not just have an infinite number of thoughts for the writer of the Psalm, but the Creator has an infinite number of thoughts about you and about me and about every creature in the world. And every star and planet and asteroid in the universe. Wow... My mind is stretching a little bit here.

This concept of God's thoughts about us is a place of potential human connection and healing. I recently heard a comedian say "I am a unique individual.... Just like everybody else." This clever phrase touches on the ironic that has been used to create peace and justice in the world.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; having observed Mahatma Gandhi, who based his teaching on the teachings of Jesus; was able to do his work with non-violence precisely because he saw that injustice against any one creature, is an affront and attack on every one of God's creatures. All of us as God's unique children are connected in amazing grace - the care and thoughts of the universe toward us. We are literally brothers and sisters of the same family and so when we attack one another, we are harming our very own family. This is why in France the phrase "Je suis Charlie" I am Charlie became a rallying cry. And why Jewish people carried "I am a Muslim" signs while Muslims raised "I am Jewish" signs. This call to realize we are in this difficult thing called life together is not just a Christian message.

The Qur'an says: Hold fast, all together, to God's rope, and be not divided among yourselves. Remember with gratitude God's favor on you, for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His grace you became brethren. ... Let there arise out of you one community, inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: those will be prosperous. Be not be like those who are divided amongst themselves.

The Veda's of Hinduism say: Let your aims be common, and your hearts of one accord, and all of you be of one mind, so you may live well together

Confucius told this story. Abruptly he [King Hsiang] asked me, "Through what can the Empire be settled?" "Through unity," I said. "Who can unite it?" the King asked. "One who is not fond of killing can unite it," I said.

The Sikh's teach: Let all mankind be thy sect.

Consider the family of humankind one. Jainism.

My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. is in our tradition Isaiah 56.7

The understanding of the unity of all of us is the only basis upon which peace with justice will ever be built. As we approach our Honoring of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. tomorrow, I would encourage us all to do something to help us remember our unity as God's children. One possible thing is to go to the movie Selma, which highlights the many people who were instrumental in gaining Civil Rights. But I will warn you that part of that Movie portrays the deaths of the four little girls killed in the bombing of a Birmingham church: Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Denise McNair we may see the faces of Nicole and Alexis and Brandy and Reilly.

We are each one of us are awesomely made... a wonder. All of life is a wonder and a Gift from God. Let us cultivate that awareness and we may learn to live in peace. AMEN