

“GOD: HE’S EVERYWHERE, HE’S EVERYWHERE.”

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for the Sermon: Psalm 139:7-12; Acts 17:24-27

Introduction.

Ever since the fall man was wanted to be like God and with the help of computers and the internet it seems like we are getting close. Google cameras and satellites have mapped and recorded just about every square inch of this planet allowing us to be present everywhere and see everything God sees.

Facebook wants to be everywhere, recording every idol thought. Judging from all the selfies it’s in every bedroom and bathroom and social gathering. They stirred up some controversy last year when they moved to offer a limited free internet to India and Africa. What they miss Instagram and Twitter pick up.

NSA wants to be everywhere and know everything, listening to everyone, reading everyone’s e-mail. But let’s talk about who really is everywhere.

We come this morning to the third of the three big omni’s about God. With regard to knowledge, we know God is *omniscient*, He knows everything and His knowledge is infallible. With regard to power, we know God is *omnipotent*, He can do anything He wills to do.

When we think of God as infinite with regard to space, we call that *omnipresence*. His presence has no limit, it is infinite. God is Lord of space and cannot be limited by space. He is close to and next to everything.

How big is God?

This is a favorite mental exercise of children. We usually answer bigger than our world, bigger than the whole universe. But to be accurate we should say that God isn’t big or small, God has no size or shape, God is not bigger than the universe. God is spirit, He is immaterial. God doesn’t have definable boundaries or limitations, He can’t be measured or quantified.

Solomon in his prayer for the temple says:

I Kings 8:27 But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!

Where is God? Everywhere or in heaven?

We have material bodies so we are here and not there. As much as mothers would like to be in two places at once, we don't have the gift of bi-presence. Angels are spirits, with spiritual bodies. They are not bound by space, but they are someplace and not everywhere.

God is present everywhere in all creation. God's omnipresence is beautifully and poetically described in *Psalm 139*:

David starts with the womb, that God is present with us from our very beginning. And that never changes. There is nowhere in the entire universe where God is not presence.

If I go up to heaven you are there, if I descend to the depth of the grave you are there. If I go to the top of Mt. Everest or the bottom of the Mariana Trench, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning, if I travel at the speed of light, I cannot escape God's eye. And if all that fails, surely darkness will cover me, yet even darkness is like light to God.

Some think of God as only being up there in heaven somewhere, out of sight, out of mind. Heaven is His throne and the earth is His footstool, He inhabits it all.

Some speculate that our universe might be inside a larger universe. Some even go so far as to say there are many universes. This much is beyond speculation. If God created a million universes, He equally and fully inhabits them all without any limitation, without in anyway being stretched thin. God is present at every point of space.

How fully present is God everywhere?

Jeremiah 23:23-24 Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? 24 Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord.

Do I not fill heaven and earth? I, God Himself, the whole essence of God. God is present at every point of space with His whole and entire being. All of God is fully present right here and right now. God Himself is here.

But while all the essence of God is present, He manifests Himself differently in different places. His presence in heaven is manifested differently than His presence on earth and at different times on earth.

This explains the many special manifestations of God on earth, how God can be fully present and yet be present in a special way in a burning bush or a pillar of cloud and fire, or on the Ark of the Covenant, or in the pouring out His Spirit at Pentecost.

When God is said to be far off or near, to hide His face from the wicked or to indwell believers, these statements are not referring to His essential essence which fills the heavens and the earth

fully and equally. Rather they are statements concerning the manifestation of His presence or blessings.

We shouldn't say God is more present in heaven than on earth, but we can say God is present in a special way in heaven that is different from the way He is present here. God is not present in un-believers in the same way He is in believers.

The full presence of God everywhere all the time gave the prophets of God license to mock false prophets and idols. Remember Elijah on Mt. Carmel mocking the prophets of the false god and idol Baal.

I Kings 18:27 Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened."

There is no God like the God of the Bible. How incredible is our God, how vast and beyond fully knowing or understanding; how incomprehensible is our God; how glorious and majestic. Who can fathom the greatness of our God? Heaven is His throne and the earth is His footstool. Light years are nothing to God. Trillions of miles completely unnoticed. He inhabits a hundred billion galaxies and every square inch of our planet, next to me and next to you.

Is Hell the absence of God's presence?

Tim Keller, a famous pastor in NYC and a popular writer, recently said hell is the absence of God. He isn't alone in this opinion, many have said the same thing. Is that true? Is that possible? Is there some place in this universe where God is not present? No, it's not possible if God is an infinite God. God cannot cease to be omnipresent.

But an astute reader of the Bible will ask what about II Thessalonians 1:9?

II Thessalonians 1:9 [Those who don't know God] will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

How do we reconcile that with Psalm 139 saying God is in Sheol and with Revelation 14: **Revelation 14:10** he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

God is just as present in hell as in heaven or on earth, but his presence there is different. Away from His presence means away from His blessings and glory, away from His grace and mercy. Hell is where God is present in His infinite justice and wrath. The worst thing about hell is the presence of God there. For those in hell the presence of God is without comfort, the presence of God is part of the torment.

Practical implications and Application.

What does it mean for us to be in the presence of God, to live our lives in His presence, the one before all hearts are open and all thoughts are known?

Hebrews 4:13 No creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

We should think about this truth until it sinks in deep enough to make a difference in our lives. Moses stood in the presence of God as a consuming fire and it changed his life forever.

It's possible to read Psalm 139 in two ways. One way is positive, that David finds comfort in the nearness and presence of God, that no matter where he goes, God is there. But it is also possible to read this in a negative way. David is trying to escape, he is trying to run and hide. Why does David say this if he isn't trying to find some darkness to cover him?

Is his conscience bothering him? Is he like Adam, attempting the impossible, endeavoring to hide from God? Do we hear a hint of resignation in David's voice, no matter how hard he tries, he can't get away, he can't escape the hound of heaven? He is always where we are.

God's presence has two effects on us, it is cause to tremble and cause to be comforted. This attribute of God is like the Heidelberg Catechism, it starts with misery and leads to mercy.

We all know the experience of trying to hide. Parents know that strange silence that falls in the house that means someone is up to no good.

We all know the experience of trying to keep something from others, cover up, be unnoticed, that furtive glance over the shoulder. We know when we want to keep secret sin secret.

How deceived we can be, thinking no one will know, but secret sin never remains completely secret. And secret sin often has terrible consequences.

Do you remember the story of the fall of Jericho when God said that everything was to be destroyed, no plunder taken. But one man, Achan, stole some silver and gold and hid it in his tent. His secret sin was exposed by God through Joshua. His secret sin brought judgment on him and all his house, terrible consequences (Joshua 7:10-26).

Do you remember the story of Elisha's servant Gehazi. Naaman, a foreigner from Syria, came to Elisha to be healed of leprosy. After he was healed he tried to give a gift to Elisha but he refused it. After Naaman departed, Elisha's servant Gehazi chased after Naaman and told him Elisha changed his mind and wanted a gift. Naaman gladly gave it and Gehazi hid it in his house. Elisha confronted him and he lied, but Elisha exposed his lie and his greed and said the leprosy that was removed from Naaman would be on Gehazi and his descendants forever (II Kings 5:15-27).

We work so hard to keep our sins from each other, but think nothing of God seeing and knowing all of them. *Strange how we fear man more than God.*

Sometimes our secret sins are dealt with quickly, and sometimes the consequences are a long time in coming, even on the next generation. We are foolish if we think we can hide forever from the living God who sees just as well in the dark as in the light, who is right there with us when we do evil. We are deceived if we think there will be no consequences.

Some of you are hiding secret sins, some of your families are suffering from those sins. Turn from your anger and bitterness, from your criticizing and complaining. Turn from your abusive words and actions, for your sexual immorality and infidelity. Turn to the God who is right there next to you.

Of all the places God dwells, where does He most delight to dwell? In the heart of a broken and contrite sinner, in the heart of one humbled and turned toward Him.

As parents Phama and I have prayed countless times that when our sons sin that they would be caught and caught quickly and we were amazed at how many times God answered that prayer. But we should all pray that pray for ourselves if we have our soul's best interest at heart.

It is the kindness of God when we are caught and repent. Remember how David said his secret sin was eating him up inside, how he was wasting away and groaning under the heavy hand of God until he acknowledged his sin (Psalm 32:3-7).

David was honest about his sin when he said to God, "Against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (Psalm 51:4).

Oh that we would fear God and be quick to repent, to hate our sin and turn and flee from it rather than flee from God. Plead with God for deliverance, find a confessor, repent, change your heart and your ways.

Ask God to search out our thoughts and motives, our intentions and actions, so that there can be repentance and change, a clearing of our accounts and records, that we might stand before God acquitted and justified.

God's presence is a practical comfort.

God's presence makes our world personal, not impersonal. God is here. He is intimate with each one of us. God is closer to us than we are to ourselves, closer than our thoughts and skin.

To Isaac God said, "I will be with you and will bless you" (Genesis 26:3).

God told Moses He would be with his mouth and teach him what to say.

To Isaiah God said, "Fear not, for I am with you; ... I will strengthen you, I will help you" (Isaiah 41:10).

To Jeremiah God said, “I am with you to save you and deliver you” (Jeremiah 15:20). Jesus tells us He will be with us even to the very end, and enable us to make disciples.

God is with us to enable us to resist temptations, He is nearer to us than Satan.
God is with us to enable us to endure afflictions, even when all around us abandon us.
God is with us to enable us to do whatever hard thing He lays on us to do in His perfect providence. His presence is our strength.

God is fully present to your every need and circumstance and situation and trial and difficulty. He is with us when we are mucking out stalls, changing diapers, doing paperwork, solving problems. God cannot be absent or ignorant of where you are and what is going on. God cannot be present and passive, He is present and active, powerfully working all things for His glory and our benefit and blessing. “In Him we live and move and have our being.”

Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

God is a very present help in time of trouble (Psalm 46:1). He is never far from any of us (Acts 17:27).

When God seems most absent to you, that is when He is actually most present. The cross proves this. To Jesus on the cross God seemed most utterly absent, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Yet there Jesus also said, “into your hands I commit my Spirit.” God was more present on the cross than anywhere else in the universe, because it was there God poured out His greatest blessings.

Let us make our consciousness of God’s presence with us a way of life. Let us practice the presence of God in our daily home life, in our conversations, in our decisions, in our work and worship. Ask for a deeper sense of the fullness of the presence of God. Be aware of the spiritual presence of Christ as we join Him here at His table.

Prayer:

Holy Father, before whom all hearts are open and all thoughts known, and from whom there is no hiding, help us to know this aspect of your character and nature that it would be increasingly true for us that “in your presence is fullness of joy.” Knowing you more fully is our path to fullest joy, help us and draw us nearer, further up and further in, for the sake of Christ who has opened the way into the Holy of Holies. Amen.