

## "An Ever-Present Presence "

by Rev. John C. Tittle

### Scripture Reading: Psalm 139 NRSV

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, you have searched me and known me. <sup>2</sup> You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. <sup>3</sup> You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. <sup>4</sup> Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely. <sup>5</sup> You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. <sup>7</sup> Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. <sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, <sup>10</sup> even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. <sup>11</sup> If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," <sup>12</sup> even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you. <sup>13</sup> For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup> I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. <sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. <sup>16</sup> Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed. <sup>17</sup> How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! <sup>18</sup> I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you. <sup>19</sup> O that you would kill the wicked, O God, and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me— <sup>20</sup> those who speak of you maliciously, and lift themselves up against you for evil! <sup>21</sup> Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? <sup>22</sup> I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies. <sup>23</sup> Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. <sup>24</sup> See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What jumps out at you about this passage?
2. Have you ever tried to run from God in your life before? What happened?
3. Where is the most surprising place you have "found God?"
4. How do you reconcile this passage with times in life when it seemed God was entirely absent? Is it possible that God's presence can be experienced as an absence?
5. There's a saying that often times you must go through a breakdown to experience a breakthrough. Why do we sometimes sense God most closely when life is falling apart?
6. Does God's ever-present presence give you comfort? Are there times it might make you uncomfortable?
7. Verses 19-22 can be a little jarring. What do you make of it? Then read verses 23-24. How does this psalmist recover from this moment of honest feeling and rawness? What can we learn for our own lives today and hatreds and resentments we struggle with?
8. John Calvin wrote that knowledge of God and knowledge of self are interconnected. How does Psalm 139 speak to that?
9. Slowly read and pray over verses 23-24 a few times. Invite God to search you and then listen. Do you hear the still small voice speaking to you about yourself at all?