

Lead Me in the Way Everlasting

Pastor J. Christian Andrews from the Immanuel
Lutheran Church in Springfield, MO

For You formed my inward parts;

You wove me in my mother's womb.

Psalm 139:13

My favorite literature unit while teaching 6th and 8th grades (seems like a lifetime ago) was poetry. I'm not a particularly good poet. Rhyme is easy, but rhythm is a bear (even to spell). I don't have much by way of music in my bones, and one needs a real good sense of the beat to revel in rhythm. But figurative language and imagery! Yes, we use similes and metaphors and imagery in prose, both fiction and non; but poetry is made of figurative language and imagery. Maybe that is why Psalm 139 is my favorite (besides its amazing content). "You know when I sit down and when I rise up" (v.2). "If I take the wings of the dawn" (v.9). "When I was made in secret, / And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth" (v.15).

The Psalm begins with an acknowledgment that God knows all about us. He knows what we think. He knows what we do, where we are, and where we go. He knows the words we will speak even before they are formed on our tongues. Depending on the perspective from which we see God, His knowledge is either fear inspiring or awe inspiring. All God knows will either scare us or comfort us, so there is possible double meaning in the psalmist's confession when he says, "You have enclosed me behind and before, / And laid Your hand upon me" (v.5). Is this God's hand of wrath against my sin, a spanking so to speak? Is this the hand of my caregiving Father pulling me into His lap? Or maybe it's a bit of both depending on whether I need to be challenged by Law or comforted by Gospel.

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As the psalmist contemplates God's hand upon him,

Pastor Schultz



The purpose of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church is to worship God in a Bible-based, Christ-centered ministry, evangelizing, discipling, nurturing and equipping people for the spiritual well-being of every life.

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As the psalmist contemplates God's hand upon him, he asks, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? / Or where can I flee from Your presence?" (v.7). Is he afraid of God's anger and looking for an escape? Is he wanting assurance that there is no place where he will be apart from His Father's protection? Again, there is likely some ambiguity here, the answer to the questions depending on the state of our hearts with God. The lines that follow, however, would seem to point to the latter, that the psalmist is finding great comfort in knowing that wherever it is life leads him, God will be there before him. These lines are beautifully poetic, filled with imagery and figurative language. Heaven is the space above; Sheol is the space below. The wings of the dawn is the expanse to the east as far as the east will go; the remotest part of the sea is the west as far as the west will go (remembering that the psalmist lived in Israel and that the Mediterranean Sea lapped the entire west coast of his land). I am reminded here of another powerful image from the Psalter: "As far as the east is from the west, / So far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). Darkness cannot overwhelm, light cannot be dark, because they are both as nothing to God. It's in the midst of these images that the psalmist confesses, "Even there Your hand will lead me" (v. 10). He knew himself to be completely surrounded by his LORD.

While there is great mystery in God's creative process, there is no mystery to the psalmist as to how it can be that God's knowledge and protective care is all encompassing. Again, the imagery is powerful as the words take us into the secret places, the metaphorical depths of the earth, where we have been woven together. God knows us and keeps us because He wrought us, skillfully. He saw us even before we were formed. He wrote the days of our lives in His book before there was even one of them. All the psalmist can do at this point is erupt in thanksgiving, marveling at how fearfully and wonderfully we are made, and at how precious God's thoughts are. To Abraham the sand of the sea counted his offspring. To David the sand of the sea is nothing compared to God's gracious thoughts. So David is quick to call for the destruction of the wicked because the wicked oppose God's plan and creative power. He recognizes the sacred nature of life, sacred because it is by the hand of God that we are made.

God inspired David, the psalmist, to pen his words skillfully, a reflection of the skill with which God wove us together in the womb, the depths of the earth. He, the psalmist, made known, with beautiful and powerful imagery and figurative language, God's nature and loving presence. In the end, he humbled himself, as ought we, asking mercy and life of God. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; / Try me and know my anxious thoughts; / And see if there be any hurtful way in me, / And lead me in the everlasting way" (v. 24, 25).



ORLC will be having our quarterly meeting online via Zoom on Saturday, June 6th at 9:30 am.

You can join us by following this link:

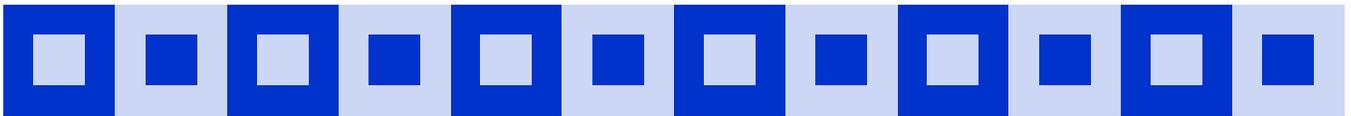
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84439036444?pwd=Y0tpd1pEd0dwc0Q5V1FwT1dvdzV1dz09>

If you cannot join via computer, you can call in.

Call +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

Meeting ID: 844 3903 6444

Password: 029753



ORCS will be finishing up their school year with graduations on June 1st and 2nd via Zoom.

A big thank you to our teachers for your work this year, especially taking on distance learning for the last part of our year. And a special mention to those teachers who are leaving the school at the end of this year. Christa Donahue, Nikki Schuette, and Miriam Schultz are all following other pursuits next year. We will miss you all!

