

Psalm 139:1, NRSV

¹O LORD, you have searched me and known me.

(slide #1)

"Do You Know Me?"

Do you know me? Do I need to introduce myself? I am Joseph Thomas Burkhardt. I am the Associate Minister at Faith UMC in North Canton. I am 31 years old, born June 7 in 1976. 6/7/76. I am married to Jeanette; we were joined in holy matrimony on August 15, 1998. I live on Pershing Ave., SE, here in North Canton. I graduated from Buckeye Trail High School in 1994. I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Malone College in 1998 and a Master of Divinity degree from Ashland Theological Seminary in 2005.

(slide #2) Oh, and I love dark chocolate! No kidding. I will sit down with a bag of chocolate chips and just chow down. Who needs cookie dough? It just gets in the way of the good stuff. And by the way, if you haven't tried the Free Trade goods out in the gathering area, go for the dark chocolate. I mean, yes, will you be honoring God by supporting indigenous farmers the world over. But let me tell you something: that stuff is *silky smooth*. I should have brought some up here with me. You can have candy. And donuts? Puh-lease! Just give me chocolate, straight up. Brownies? Now we're talkin'. And Jeanette makes these chocolate cookies with mint-chocolate chips. You need to try them. No really, you **NEED** to try them. **But not my share.**

Dude, I love chocolate! I'm sorry. Did I just say "dude"?

There. Now you have it. I've just given you everything you need to know about me. Now you know me. Right?

Do you know me? I've just given you a few details about my life. Does that mean that you know me?

Listen to the verse again.

(slide #3)

Psalm 139:1, NRSV

¹O LORD, you have searched me and known me.

That word "known" is a translation of the common Hebrew word *yada* (יָדָע), which means "to know". But the Hebrew word is so much deeper, richer and more varied in its meaning than the English equivalent. I mentioned before that we use the word primarily to describe how much information we have. We think of "knowing" as the basis for getting on *Jeopardy!*, so that Alex Trebek can make fun of you for the things that you should "know" but you don't "know".

But scriptural "knowledge" is different. To "know" indicates proximity to the thing being known. In English, we can say we "know" a person just because

we've seen his or her bio. In Hebrew, knowing someone indicates intimacy on some level. Indeed, the King James Version literally translates the word *yada*, "to know," to mean "having sexual relations," as in "Adam knew Eve." Now, biblical "knowing" doesn't require that level of intimacy; otherwise, we would never be able to know each other on any significant level. But, it does point to the reality that to "know" someone requires connecting on a deeper level than just informational.

Do you know me? I mean, do you really know me? Just because you know a few things ABOUT me doesn't mean that you really KNOW me. To really know someone requires a longer and deeper relationship than the sharing about myself that I just did. My friends know me a little better than most people I meet on a day-to-day basis. In some ways, my kids know me better than my friends; in some ways, not so well. My wife knows me best of all. But even she is limited.

The truth is that we are all limited in knowing each other. There will always be portions of our minds, our hearts and our souls that we are unwilling or even incapable of sharing with others. We cannot fully know each other.

But there is One who knows me. "***O LORD, you have searched me and known me.***" I am known by the One who made me. And it scares me. The truth is that I don't want to be known that well. If God really has searched me, then he knows what's deep inside of me—the things I try to hide from others. God knows my failures, my fears, my brokenness. God knows my regrets, my pain and my embarrassment. God knows what I've done, and even worse, what I've thought. It's not that most of my life is terribly dark, but there is plenty in my history. And it only takes a little to corrupt anyone completely. In theology, we call this *Total Depravity*—the reality that sin impacts every part of my being, whether I want or whether I mean it to. And God knows my sin far better than I do myself. That scares me. God's knowledge means that I am vulnerable.

God knows me. Every little bit, inside and out, both the good and the bad.

I want you to hear the Psalm (at least 18 verses of it). I want you to listen to the vulnerability of the psalmist here. I am not going to comment on these verses. Any one of them could be the basis of a thousand sermons. It is sufficient to let them stand on their own.

(slides #4-12)

Psalm 139:1-18, NRSV

¹***O LORD, you have searched me and known me.***

²You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

³You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely.

⁵You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

⁷Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?
⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
⁹If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
¹⁰even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.
¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,"
¹²even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

¹³For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.
¹⁴I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
¹⁶Your 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.
¹⁷How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!
¹⁸I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you.

There is One who knows me. God knows me completely. He knew me before I was born; he will know me throughout eternity. He knows me better than I know myself. And yet he loves me. It will never cease to amaze me how God could love each one of us so much that he was willing to give up his own Son for us. When you feel alone...when you feel like a failure...when you feel afraid...know that the One who made you *knows* you. And he invites you to know him—at least as much as we can handle at this point.

(slide #13) This is the beauty of Communion: God invites us to commune with him because Jesus gave himself up for our sins. The God who knows our failings better than we do still calls out to us with his grace. The God who knows that we are helpless in our sin and in our failure has already done what needs to be done for us to know him—Christ has done what we could not do.

I invite you to consider your own weakness, the aspects of your life that you would just rather no one else knew. God knows. I invite you to consider the sacrifice that our Lord made for us, so that we could know him. As Psalm 139 ends, let us pray together:

(slide #14)

Psalm 139:23-24, NRSV

²³*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts.*

²⁴*See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

(slides #15-30)