

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

East Moline, Illinois

Pastor Becky Sherwood

September 8, 2019, The 13th Sunday After Pentecost/The 23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Philemon 1-21, Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

CREATED!

Intro to the OT Reading

Before we listen to this morning's Old Testament Lesson from Psalm 139, I'm going to ask you to reflect for a moment on what this week has held for you. What have you carried with you into this sanctuary?

--Has a been a great week at school, or a rough week at school, or a little of both?

--At work this week, was it the same old-same old, or was it more chaotic, more frustrating, more surprising, or more exhausting, or more amazing fun week at work?

--How was it at home this week? Were you hugging the people you live with, or ready to disown them? Or somewhere in between?

--How was it with God this week? Did you bump into each other during the week, or is this morning in the sanctuary the first time in 7 days since you've thought about God? Or somewhere in between?

--What kind of week was this emotionally? Was it sunny days and blue skies, or living inside category 5 hurricane winds? Or was there so much going on that it would just be too much to categorize it at all?

--What else has the week held that I haven't even listed yet?

I invite you now to listen to Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18. With all that our lives hold this Psalm is a powerful reminder of who we are in God's heart, day by day. I encourage you, just for this week to not follow along in the pew Bibles, but to close your eyes and listen to this prayer that is for each of us:

Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18

"And if I asked you to name all the things that you love, how long would it take for you to name yourself?" I bumped into this anonymous quote last year and I printed it out, and now I bump into it every time I open the towel closet in my bathroom where I have it taped up. It reminds me of the promises of Psalm 139.

"And if I asked you to name all the things that you love, how long would it take for you to name yourself?"

Psalm 139 reminds us of the amazing good news that we are beloved children of God, each of us created in love. As a crocheter, which is almost like a knitter, I've always loved that image of God knitting each of us together in our creation.

For those of us who knit or crochet, or create in wood, or in the cards we make or the crafts we do, or the gardens we create, or the meals with cook, or goodies we bake, the words we write, the programming we do on our computers, the gaming we invent,

there is something powerful and playful in the creation, isn't there?

As we choose the colors, the patterns, the textures, the dynamics of whatever we are creating, we are given a small glimpse of how God creates.

When you were formed by God,

with unique creativity God was using a one-of-a-kind pattern with your name on it.

With love in God's heart you were created for love and by love.

This Psalm invites us to even boast a bit about who we are: The Psalmist says to God: "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Or as the Message translation puts it: "I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking! Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration—what a creation! You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something."

We are each marvelous creations of our loving God.

We are each Hand-tailored, hand-crafted, God-dreamed creations of our loving God.

With all that you thought of when I asked you to reflect on your week a minute ago...in the midst of whatever you thought of, you are a marvelous, lovingly crafted creation of our God.

Each of you deserves to be on your own lists of what you love in your lives.

Your life is a gift God has given to you.

In the words of Psalm 139 we are promised that God isn't a creator who makes us and then leaves us on our own. God's love is always there, wrapped around us, in front of us, behind us and within us. When we sit down, when we stand up, when we lie down, when we get up, God is with us! God is with us, loving us marvelous creations!

A couple weeks ago I stumbled across a quote from Soren Kierkegaard, a Christian thinker of the 19th century. He was writing about how God loved us first, before we ever learned to love God, or other people, or ourselves. He wrote that we talk as if God loved us first and then that love become part of our history. As if there was just love at our creation while we were being knit together, and then we were sent on our way.

He wrote: "You have loved us first, O God, alas! We speak of it in terms of history as if You have only loved us first but a single time, rather than that without ceasing You have loved us first many times and every day and our whole life through. When we wake up in the morning and turn our soul toward You – You are the first – You have loved us first; if I rise at dawn and at the same second turn my soul toward You in prayer, You are there ahead of me, You have loved me first. When I withdraw from the distractions of the day and turn my soul toward You, You are the first and thus forever. – *Soren Kierkegaard*

Day by day, moment by moment, God gets there first and says to each of us: "you are my beloved child, you are my marvelous creation. I am with you always."

Somehow, this has become of sermon of collected quotes: two of which I put on the front of your bulletins.

In a Palm Sunday sermon Kurt Vonnegut, writer of many banned books in the last century, wrote: "People don't come to church for preachments, of course, but to daydream about God."

I hope you will go home and read and reread Psalm 139, in your Bibles, online, in your Kindles or phones. Then I invite you daydream about what it means in your life that you are loved by the surrounding love of God.

Because you really are beloved children of God, one-of-a-kind marvelous creations of our God who loves you first, over and over again, loving you first.

The second quote on your bulletin covers comes from a 14th century Persian Poet who went by the name Hafez. He wrote:

“Every child has known God,
 Not the God of names,
 Not the God of don’ts,
 Not the God who ever does Anything weird,
 But the God who knows only 4 words.
 And keeps repeating them, saying:
 “Come Dance with Me, come dance.”

Quoted in: Boyle, Gregory, *Barking to the Choir, The Power of Radical Kinship*,
 New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017, p. 14

I invite you to daydream and to dance with the God who dreamed you into creation, as you listen to a final quote that comes in the words of a song I will play for you. Shaina Noll is a musician I was introduced to this year. She has written a song that dances its way from Psalm 139 into our lives. It is called “Each Holy Child.”

Please listen, and revel, and daydream, and dance with the good news, that you are a beloved child of God; you are a holy child:

Shaina Noll, “*Each Holy Child*,” found on: “*You Can Relax Now*.”

Play to time: 3:50/9:23 Each child that’s born is a holy child
 So you were born a holy child.
 And I as born a holy child.
 Chorus: Holy child.
 Rise up and walk, you’re a holy child.

Label: Singing Heart, 2002