

The Season Holder

Text: Psalm 31: 14-15b; Psalm 90: 1-2, 12; Psalm 139: 7-12

Rev. Dr. Geordie Campbell

January 21, 2018

There's always a risk in taking things too personally. It's a natural inclination for many, even most of us, of course – something about human nature and the warp and woof of our own perspective. And the propensity to put any one of us at center is both a delicate a shaky proposition. Still, I want to take that risk today.

Closer to the point. It's a pretty audacious leap when any of us purports to getting too chummy with the Bible, to being overly familiar with scripture, thinking in pure error that a certain passage could have been written precisely for us, to us, as a kind of individually-prescribed-scripture-gram from on high.

Still today I want to dare both leap and risk by simply unwrapping a very personal Psalm with you. It's among my favorites. I'll take it as a birthday bonus to have the privilege to do so. And, while I am aware that millions of others across time stake favor with it as well, this one was written for me. Let's trace it together.

A first strophe. Dear God you are the Season Holder of my life! You have been so from the first instance of my being. No matter my circumstance or age, condition or address; whether in California at my début or any of the places I have laid my head ever since, you have searched me and you have known me!

The fresh taste and language of The Message goes on: "You know me like an open book! When I sit down and when I rise up. When I look ahead and when I look behind. Your presence comes and goes but does not stop. This is all too wonderful for me. I cannot take it all in!"

Actually, it's an odd thing to say in a day when so much information is accessible about any of us. You know, with privacy needs, HIPPA laws, cyber security, data breeches and stolen identities all being such constant concerns. Even kids at digital play are collecting and transmitting data! Actually, it's a scary kind of creepy just to know that.

But lift the truth to a higher altitude. Elevate it to a wider place. Rise to hear it with a deeper promise. Because it's revealing something amazing unfathomable about God's attentiveness. Hebrew scholars tell us this is *the* most personal expression in scripture of God's radical and monotheistic providence. And that in and through this Psalm God gets who we really are at the core, the heart, the soul - where deep calls to deep.

And then a second strophe. Because there is there is Way More Here, too. And to be silly but not simple, the Way More Here might be something like the Ginza knife commercials on TV because with God there is always more. This Presence, this Heart, this Mystery; More Compassion, More Love, More of the Holy. It simply does not stop. And there is no place in the universe we can escape that – even if we tried!

"Where can I flee? If I climb to the sky, you're there! If I go underground, you're there! If I fly on morning's wings to the far western horizon you're already there waiting! Even my darkest and toughest times are no match for you."

Birthday or any other, this is incomprehensible news. Because it's in the skinny, murky, muddy or thick times, however we speak of them, that wondering about God really kicks in and meets the road for most of us. Times when the top tumbles down and the bottom goes deeper than we understood.

C. S. Lewis came to know this right well. He came to see that it was in retrospect that he could best discern God's presence. "You cannot see my face, only my backside," God was to say. And so Lewis wrote to God.

"So, it was you all along. It was you in every event. It was you asking me if I wanted to grow. It was you waiting for me to see the mystery. You disguised as anyone I ever loved. You when my small images of you broke into a million places. All along, all along, it was you."

And then a last strophe. "You shaped me first inside, then out; body and soul; every bone and muscle. You sculpted from nothing into something; all the stages and ages and times of my life. Let me rise in the morning and live always with you! And guide me on the way everlasting."

One of my old friends, Gregory Norbet of Weston Priory writes: "*There is a of pearl great price within you. It is your hidden self where God abides, the seed of all goodness and love, the power of all that is wholesome and life-giving. May you always honor the greatness of your soul, and nurture that place of being from which others drink deeply.*"

Apropos for this week and in honor and remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. are his own words. "In your life's blueprint should be a deep belief in your own dignity, your own worth, and your own some-body-ness. Don't allow anybody to make you feel that you are nobody. Always feel that you count. Always feel that you have worth. And always feel you're your life has ultimate significance. Be a bush if you can't be a tree, if you can't be a highway just be a trail, if you can't be the sun be a star, it isn't by size that you win or you fail, be the best of whatever you are."

So I take my rest here. But not before I tell you a secret that is no really secret at all. *This is not really my Psalm!* How dangerously narcissistic to even hint at that! In fact, darn near blasphemous!

But I take it as mine because I believe it so deeply and with every fiber of who I am. And people have taken it just so for nearly four thousand years as it has belonged to everyone and anyone along the way who has cared enough to take it to heart.

"O Lord, you have search us and known us from the very first!" What a gift! What a truly amazing gift! Birthday or any other living, breathing day of our lives. Amen.

© 2018 Charles Geordie Campbell

First Church
12 South Main Street
West Hartford, CT 06107