

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

John 1:43-51

## To Be Known

There are people that we know and people that we really know. We have ways to describe relationships. There are people we have met on a one off. We may know the clerk that is always at the grocery store when we pass through the check out. We may know the people at the local coffee shop. We have those we call acquaintances, others we know as teacher, doctor, or even preacher. There are those we know more closely and those we know little about. The depth of our relationships with relatives can be everything from just saying hello to those with which we regularly have conversations. Sometimes we think we know someone only to find out that they were not at all who we thought them to be. We understand the depth of our relationships with people through how much we know and understand about them.

Both the Psalm and the reading from the Gospel of John are about being known. The psalmist writes about how deeply we are known by God. In fact, the first verse says, "O Lord, you have searched me and known me." This very line speaks to the depth of God's knowing of who we are. It is so intimate that God knows when you sit down and rise up. God has the ability to discern our thoughts from far away and is acquainted with all our ways. The writer continues to say that God knows before a word is on our tongue.

This deep knowing can be pretty overwhelming as the psalm says, where can one go from God's Spirit, or how can one flee from the presence of God? God formed us, knit us together in our mother's womb. In other words, there is nothing about you and I that God does not know or understand. I think sometimes we believe we can hide things from God, and that is just not possible.

Rather than being something to fear, the knowledge that we are known so intimately and still loved by God can bring a feeling of hope and grace. With all that we know about ourselves...what is beautiful, loving, kind, and gracious, and also what we know about ourselves as secrets we hold that we hope no one else will ever know, or those things we have done that have hurt others and we are deeply saddened by, embarrassed, or sorry for, even when we cannot express it...God knows it all and loves us anyway.

God hopes that God's love, expressed in the life of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit, will bring about transformation, growth, change for the better, and grace for ourselves and one another. God's grace and forgiveness is a way we become who we desire to be in our relationships with ourselves and others, but it is not a prerequisite. It

is what happens as we come to know God's grace, forgiveness, and love in our own lives.

And that is also where the writing from the Gospel of John has something to say to us. The Gospel of John is all about revealing who Jesus is and our relationship with Jesus. In John, people are consistently being invited to encounter Jesus, to be in relationship with Jesus. And not only that, but to then invite others to come to know Jesus. This invitation is not so our churches can grow and we can feel good about ourselves and how many butts are in the pews or how many people are watching our services online, but so that lives may be transformed.

This transformation comes about from coming to know Jesus, God, and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It is about becoming community, as that is truly where people can learn more about themselves, God, and others. Community is where we can work to transform more broadly the places that we live, work, and worship.

In the gospel we can read of the many and different ways that people came to know each other and Jesus. Jesus calls people to himself and they answer that call, such as what happened when Andrew learns of Jesus and then introduces his brother, Simon Peter, to Jesus.

In the reading from today, Jesus found Philip, who was from the same city as Andrew and Peter and it is Philip who then tells Nathanael about Jesus. Now Nathanael isn't as readily willing to engage in the knowing of Jesus that the first three were and sarcastically says, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" That being Jesus' home town.

Yet, Jesus takes the question, one that was not intended to be kind, and graciously engages Nathanael, actually praising him as an Israelite in whom there is no deceit? Of course, Nathanael wonders how the heck this guy could know anything about him for they have only just met. And though we have not much to go on, for some reason, Nathanael, just like Andrew, Peter, and Philip before him, recognize that there is something about this man Jesus that is calling them into relationship.

Jesus' response to Nathanael's declaration that Jesus must be the Son of God, the King of Israel, is only glimpsing that which is something remarkable which he and others will not fully understand until after Jesus' death and resurrection.

But to "know" someone is to see them and the depth of who they are. In the Bible to know someone is a truly intimate act. It is how the psalm describes God's knowing of us, and in the Gospels, it is about Jesus knowing us, and people coming into relationship with Jesus. This is not just some casual acquaintance. This is a deep relationship that changes who we are and the way we encounter and embrace the world.

It is a relationship of transformation and abundance. Not an abundance of wealth and material goods, but an abundance of love, grace, hope, and yes relationship with

others. It is a deep and abiding trust in the God who has known us from the time we were in our mother's womb.

Thing is, we are invited into this relationship at times by God's self. God finds us wherever we are and we feel called or compelled to learn more, to be more, to love more. At times God sends others to us to guide and support us, to invite us into deeper relationships with ourselves, others and God. Then there are the times we are called to be the ones who God asks to share the hope and love of God. We are the ones sent to someone to invite them to know God.

This is the scariest path for each of us. We are very shy about inviting people into a relationship with God. Invite them to dinner, to a concert, to see a play, to coffee, but invite them to church or a church gathering, a study, or to read scripture, or to pray with them? Well, that just seems too much to ask. Yet it is truly about just making an invitation to others. If they don't follow up or want to know more, that is not a reflection on you or their relationship with you. God just says, come and see, and so we can just say, come and see.

It could be that there will be no response to that invitation, but it could be that there is. It does not become your responsibility to make sure that they are getting to know God. God works with everyone in the way and time that is their journey. However, it may be that God is asking you to invite so that the person or people find a way to God and God to them. You might think of yourself as an ambassador for God.

Have courage. Take a chance. It is well researched and known that the main way people come to know God or dawn the doors of a church is by invitation. The invitation to a come and see could lead ourselves and others to an abundant, hope filled, and transformed life. That is what is on the line and you and I are being trusted with that. In that, maybe we will see heaven open up and a window of grace, clarity, and love extend from God into our lives and into the world. In Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Amen.