

Shame Crusher

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Date: 07 January 2024

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[0 : 00] And please take out your Bible and make your way, if you would, on over to Psalm 139. Psalm 139. Thank you.

Now, Lord willing, we are going to begin a series in the Book of Lamentations next. And so this psalm will serve as a, or this sermon will serve as a bit of preparation, a bit of preparatory work for our series in the Book of Lamentations.

And I also suspect we may take up a sermon next week from the end of 2 Kings to give us some context on the Book of Lamentations. Because otherwise that might feel a little intense just to jump right on into that type of lament without knowing how did we actually get here.

I couldn't help but notice as we were singing together, I think I would be happy to be corrected. I think three of the four songs that we have sung so far together today came to us from the Psalms. Either very closely connected to the Psalms or at least are taken from the words of the Psalms. Which is really a wonderful thing that we can sing and enjoy Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs together.

[1 : 27] I love that. Do you enjoy that? Good. Good. I'm so glad that you are here today. And I am so grateful for the privilege of opening God's Word together.

Amy, would you please come and serve us? Amy's going to read Psalm 139. And she will be reading from the New American Standard Version. That's what will be on the screen.

If your version is a little different, that'll be just fine. You can pay attention to the hearing of the Word if you'd like or follow along in your Bible. Here's Psalm 139.

Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I get up. You understand my thought from far away. You scrutinize my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before there is a word on my tongue. Behold, Lord, you know it all. You have encircled me behind and in front and placed your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.

[2 : 25] It is too high. I cannot comprehend it. Where can I go from your spirit or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, you are there.

If I take up the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there your hand will lead me and your right hand will take hold of me. If I say, surely the darkness will overwhelm me and the light around me will be night.

Even the darkness is not dark to you and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to you for you created my innermost parts. You wove me in my mother's womb.

I will give thanks to you because I'm awesomely and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in secret and skillfully formed in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes have seen my formless substance. And in your book were written all the days that were ordained for me. When as yet there was not one of them. How precious also are your thoughts for me, God.

[3 : 26] How vast is the sum of them. Were I to count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with you. If only you would put the wicked to death, God. Leave me, you men of bloodshed.

For they speak against you wickedly and your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with the utmost hatred.

They have become my enemies. Search me, God, and know my heart. Put me to the test and know my anxious thoughts. And see if there is any hurtful way in me. And lead me in the everlasting way. Thank you, sister. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for your Holy Spirit. Would you please help us as we turn our attention now to the preaching of your word?

Would you please help me to be faithful? Would you please take away anything that is unhelpful? Anything that would be distracting from the things that I have prepared?

[4 : 31] And just help me not to say those things. Would you please help those who are listening to listen actively and carefully and with discernment?

Pray that we would have our attention turned and focused again on our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are so grateful for the privilege to be here.

Would you please help us not to leave this place unchanged? If we have been grateful to come here, then we also would desire that your Holy Spirit does the work that you want to do in our hearts so that we both hear your word, but also believe it and obey it.

Would you please help us to do this by the power of the Holy Spirit? It is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen. Imagine a tree that represents anger or insecurity or bitterness or depression or loneliness or even guilt.

If you dig up the ground underneath that tree that you have imagined, you will find a root of shame.

[6 : 01] Shame lurks beneath other emotions. It is far more common than we realize because shame often wears camouflage.

It hides under other emotions. What is shame? Shame is being ghosted or ignored or overlooked, scratched off the Christmas card list, excluded from social gatherings, shunned.

Faces turn away. Eyes look down. It's as though you don't exist. And yet, ironically, shame feels like everyone knows you and your past.

So, faces turn towards you, but only in selfish curiosity, not in compassion.

Eyes stare at you, but in disgust, not delight.

[7 : 18] Shame bounces like a tennis ball during a tennis match. You feel both exposed and yet unseen.

Shame, alone, and yet the center of unwanted attention. Rejected, but still responsible.

Worthless, and yet well-remembered. Shame is the feeling that you matter so little, but people can't stop talking about you.

This is my working definition for shame, and perhaps this will, I call it a working definition because perhaps it needs some work, and maybe we will refine this as we work our way through the next several weeks together.

This is my working definition. Shame is the overwhelming sense, or even just the sneaking suspicion that I am unappreciated or undesirable and better off alone.

[8 : 34] How have you felt shame? Without raising your hand, because I expect that would be shame-inducing for many of us, I wonder if you would be honest enough to admit that you have felt shame in the past two weeks, maybe in the past two days, maybe in the past two hours.

God is faithful, and he offers us strength today and bright hope for tomorrow in the gospel of Jesus. And so if you are a child of God, then I want to assure you of this today. You are fully known, and yet graciously accepted.

This seems counterintuitive, doesn't it? We expect that the more we are known, in other words, the more exposed we are, the more isolation and rejection we will feel.

It's counterintuitive for us. But look in your Bible at verse number one of Psalm 139. O Lord, O Lord, you, you, you, you, you, you have searched me and known me.

[10 : 13] You know when I sit down and when I rise up, you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it all together. The Lord knows me. Some of us track our steps, but I suspect that none of us track how many times we sit down or stand up during the day.

Did you know that the Lord knows you that way? How often you are sitting and how often you are standing? Did you know that the Lord knows the things that you are thinking about?

Your questions, your motives, your intentions, your attitudes. We don't even know one another that way. Isn't it true that sometimes we're having a conversation with someone and we're like that funny gif where the guy just shrugs his shoulders like, I have no idea what you're thinking about.

[11:19] I just don't get you at all. God knows what you are thinking. God knows what you are going to say next. Some of us don't even know what we're going to say next, but God does.

And God never takes a break from knowing you this way. You can look down and see in verse number three, even when we are sleeping, God is keeping his eyes on us.

The Lord knows me. But you are not only known. The Lord also guides and directs your life with sovereign control.

Look at verse number five. You hem me in behind and before. I read this and I think about some water that gets spilled on a table and everyone is suddenly rushing to try to put up their arms and make a little pathway so that the water stays on the table, right?

You follow what I'm saying here? So that we can keep it all on the table, not let it get on the floor and then someone can get a towel and dry it all off. That's what's happening here.

[12:36] You hem me in behind and before and you lay your hand upon me. Not just known. guided, guided, directed, like spilled water.

You can't move an inch in any direction without the Lord's knowledge and providential care. The Lord knows everything you are doing, everything you are saying, everything you are thinking, everything you are feeling.

Look how David responds to how deeply God knows him. It's in verse six. Such knowledge, such knowledge is too wonderful for me.

It is high. I cannot attain it. Now, if the Hebrew language had an expression for mind blowing, that's I think what David would use here. He would say, this is mind blowing.

That you know me like this? that you know me this completely, this intimately, this fully, this transparently.

[13:50] That the Lord knows me so completely seems almost too good to be true. Now, in our relationships with other people, we often avoid this level of disclosure.

Does that seem true? I mean, this is, this is more transparency than you would share with a parent or a lifelong friend, even with a spouse.

We want to be known. We want to be known. But, usually, we keep our thoughts secret. Our motives, we try to kind of keep them close, right?

Our attitudes, we keep them close, hidden, undisclosed. Being fully known makes us feel, if I can use this word, naked and vulnerable, and we don't like that feeling of exposure.

Why? Why don't we like that feeling of being known? And I think the answer is, if you really knew me, if you really knew what I was thinking and feeling and planning, if you knew what I've been up to, then you wouldn't want to be with me.

[15:14] If you really knew my thoughts and my unspoken opinions and my attitudes and my grudges and my internal, my heart-level sins, you would stay away.

Let me assure you, shame-feeling, brother or sister, though the Lord knows you, you can also be certain of this. The Lord is with you.

Look at verse number seven. where shall I go from your spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there, your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me.

The Lord is with me. I love this rhetorical question in verse seven. Where shall I go from your spirit?

[16:26] But I think I love the answers to this rhetorical question even more. It reminds me of the old Sesame Street Grover sketch where he starts out near to the camera and then you see this little puppet run far away and then he says var?

Right? And then he comes running back to the camera and he says near? And then he goes on and then at the very end, right, he's like, are you getting this? And then he has to do it one more time and then he finally just collapses.

It's kind of like what David is doing here. He's like, if I go really high, you're there. You're with me there. If I could ascend up into the heavens, you'd be there.

But if I could go as far down as I can imagine, like if you buried me in a grave, that's what the Hebrews would call sheol. If you put me in a grave, if you dug a hole and stuck me in a grave, you would still be there.

But if I look way off into the far horizon to where the sun is rising, let's see, sun is rising. If I looked way over there and I saw the sun very far away and I said, I'm going to go be with the sun.

[17 : 47] Even there, you would be with me. In the high places, in the low places, far off on the horizon where the sun rises, he is close enough to hold on to you tightly like a toddler gripping three M&Ms; for using the potty.

The Lord is so present with you, child of God, that even if you try to hide, he is right there. This is like playing hide and seek with a dog, a little puppy that refuses to leave you alone.

Look at verse number 11. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, no one will find me here, and the light about me be night.

I shut off all the lights. Elam was telling me about hiding under a blanket. If I say, the darkness is covering me, and the light will be like night, even the darkness is not dark to you.

The night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. The Lord knows me, and yet he does not turn away in disgust.

[19 : 09] Even when I would like to not be seen, the Lord is with me. Why would the Lord treat you this way?

Why is it that you are so important to him? Well, the answer comes next in verse number 13. For you formed my inward parts.

You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works, my soul knows it very well.

My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Think about a child making a house with a garage out of Legos.

Think about a crafter making a project, or a writer drafting a paper, or a chef or a parent preparing a delicious meal.

[20 : 22] Right? Personal involvement demonstrates value. You matter, child of God, because you can say, the Lord made me.

from the moment of conception, God crafts every baby with careful attention to detail. Don't you dare think about an assembly line.

We need to be thinking about Etsy. That's what's happening here. Intricately woven and carefully put together, crafted like a piece of handiwork.

He formed you like we would form a piece of clay. He knit you together like knitting a cashmere sweater.

Even when you were microscopic and unrecognizable as a human, even when you were just a twinkle in your father's eye, before your birthday, God planned your everyday with loving intentionality.

[21 : 32] look at verse 16. Your eyes, the Lord's eyes, saw my unformed substance.

When no one else could see what was happening inside of your mother, the Lord saw you. He saw your unformed substance, and in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me when as yet there was none of them.

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God. How vast is the sum of them. If I would count them, they are more than the sand.

gold. Why are diamonds and gold valuable? Children, who's with me? Yes? Can hardly call you a child anymore.

Yes, they are rare. Diamonds and gold are valuable because they are rare. Now, you can go panning for gold at your lake in Minnesota.

[22 : 47] You are not going to get rich. You're just not. You're not going to strike it rich finding gold in a lake in Minnesota. And if you go dig a hole in your garden to plant some seeds, you should not expect to be digging up diamonds.

They are valuable because they are scarce, rare, and you are not going to just find them laying around. Precious metals and precious jewels, they're precious because they're difficult to find.

But I want you to notice this interesting play on words that really turns our economic theory on its head. Did you notice this? The writer of Psalm 139, he says that God's thoughts about him are so precious, but they are also innumerable.

Now, I did get a C in freshman economics and I do actually feel some shame about that, but I do know the law of supply and demand, right?

The more rare something is, the more valuable it ought to be. And yet, the psalmist here says, your thoughts to me about me are so many.

[24 : 08] Like the beach sand, there are so many thoughts that God has about you. And yet, even though there are so many of them, they're precious, valuable, rare, like gold and jewels.

As verse number 18 ends, it's like we are pulled back into a reality that we don't want to enter. Did you notice that? We've been meditating on God's goodness.

We've been meditating on his knowledge of us, of his presence with us, of the way that he values us. We've been meditating on these things. And then it's like the phone buzzes, or a child cries, or a server crashes, or a tool breaks, or some newsworthy event happens in our world.

And suddenly you are pulled back into reality. Second half of verse 18. I awake, and I am still with you.

Oh, that you would slay the wicked, oh God. Oh, men of blood, depart from me. They speak against you with malicious intent.

[25 : 41] Your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, oh Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

I hate them with complete hatred. I count them my enemies. Now, I told you during Advent that in the first grade, we memorized this psalm.

It probably won't surprise you to know that we skipped this section. But it's so funny to me now looking back. We just skipped over this and then went straight to 23 and 24.

But I think that's a miss because these verses give us context on the rest of the psalm so that we're not left wondering, well, maybe the writer of this psalm, perhaps David, maybe he had some kind of an idyllic life.

Maybe his life was perfect. Maybe he didn't have the trauma and the drama and the stresses and the concerns and all of the things that trouble me.

[26 : 49] These verses help us realize that the writer of this psalm is living in the real world like us. And he also has stress and drama and trauma and things that are concerning him right now, urgent pressing matters.

He is pursued by wicked men. The end of verse 19. Men of blood, he calls them, violent, angry, aggressive, domineering people, and he wishes that these people would just leave him alone.

Do you see that? Depart from me. He wishes that those who behave in these ways towards him would just leave him alone. Depart from me. Why?

Well, because David is concerned not about his own reputation, but about God's reputation. God's enemies are his enemies and these people are against God.

They are blaspheming God, taking his name in vain, rebellious against God, rising up, end of verse 21, against God. And so David is taking his stand with God and against sin.

[28 : 20] This is a good thing. Whenever we have a chance to do this, we should do this. Stand with God against sin. But then this psalm concludes with an appeal for God to look even more deeply inside of his heart.

Verse 23, search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any grievous way in me.

And lead me in the way everlasting. How humble, how self-aware, how emotionally mature to recognize that he may not see himself accurately.

To recognize that he still has blind spots and that even though he claims to stand with God against the wicked, he recognizes there are parts of his heart that still need the searching eyes of God.

[30 : 01] But he is not hesitant to ask God to look deeper. Why? Well, because he knows the Lord is with me.

And he knows, sorry, he knows that the Lord knows me. And he knows that the Lord is with me.

And he knows that the Lord values me because he made me.

And these are shame crushing truths. things. So he is confident in asking God to look ever more deeply inside of his heart because he wants to be fully cleansed of anything, anything, anything that might cause him to veer off of the path of everlasting life.

Jesus was born away from his home.

And he lived for a season as a foreigner in Egypt and he grew up in obscurity in Nazareth. This is probably for the best when you think about it because his mother said that he didn't have a father.

[31 : 30] But wink, wink, we all know that can't be true. So it's probably best that Jesus is off in this rough rugged town of Nazareth.

Imagine the shame. Jesus came to his own and his own people did not receive him.

John 1. And even in his hometown, Jesus was rejected. Luke chapter 4, he, Jesus said, truly I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own hometown.

Imagine Jesus encountering Psalm 139 for the first time. Imagine Jesus learning, the Lord knows me.

Imagine Jesus learning, the Lord is with me. God that despite the shame that I may feel from the words spoken about me and the fact that I'm from this terrible town of Nazareth and the fact that I'm rejected and not even accepted here where I'm known by my own people.

[33 : 04] The Lord values me. imagine Jesus claiming that God's enemies were his enemies but then rather than asking God to slay his enemies Jesus lays down his life for them.

This is what Paul writes about in Romans chapter five. While we were God's enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his son.

Friend God's offer of salvation still stands. Jesus was really born without a father and as a result his perfect life and his atoning death can pay the price for all of your sin.

God's offer of salvation still stands. He promises to save everyone who will call on the name of the Lord Jesus so come come believe come receive God's grace come and claim God knows me God is with me God made me God values me claim those beautiful shame crushing promises as your own.

won't you trust in Jesus today and receive grace and forgiveness full and free through faith in Jesus God makes enemies into beloved children now as God's beloved children as my brothers and sisters I am neither foolish enough nor arrogant enough to think that we can resolve our shame issues in one sermon but I do believe that the Holy Spirit may use Psalm 139 to begin crushing our shame that overwhelming sense or sneaking suspicion that I am unappreciated or undesirable and better off alone child of God let me assure you shame lies shame lies and says you are unknown but the

[36 : 15] Lord knows you deeply intimately! fully! Shame lies! That kind of vulnerability will drive God and other people away!

you are going to be shunned for sure but the Lord is with you present powerful and promising never to leave you shame lies it is all your fault you are the one to blame you're worthless but listen to me and hear these words the Lord formed you with utmost care he holds you tightly because he delights in you he sent his beloved son to rescue and redeem you and reconcile you to himself will you believe this again today shame lies you deserve every bad thing that happens to you you don't remember no one remembers you no one cares but the Lord by his spirit shepherds and directs and guides every day of your life just as he planned it before your first birthday you are fully known and yet graciously accepted and in the comforting truth of this gospel of

Jesus you have strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow and shame crushing joy let's pray good father we are so grateful to receive your word and we are grateful for the holy spirit's presence with us we are mindful of the places in our own hearts where we still need to be searched out so would you please help us as we take a few moments to be humble enough before you to say search me oh god and know my heart try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any grievous way in me please help us as we take a few moments in preparation for the lord's supper father we have felt the condemnation of others even those who have claimed to love us we have felt their condemnation and yet your word your promise to us is so clear in romans chapter eight there is now no condemnation for those who are in christ jesus right now no condemnation for those who are in christ jesus father those of us who by grace alone through faith alone in jesus have been brought into a right relationship with you claim this promise that there is now no condemnation would you please help us to live faithful honorable gracious kind gentle and good lives before you why why because we remember that you have saved us that you have done all of the work and that you have loved us oh father please help us to wrestle with these truths and to believe them and to cling to them as we feel condemnation and shame lying to us please help us to believe your truth instead of shame's lies it is in jesus name that we pray amen and