

# Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Feb 17, 2019

## How Does God Search Us? – Illumination/Listening

(Psalm 139)



**O Lord, you have searched me and known me.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
You discern by thoughts from far away.  
(Psalm 139:1-2)**

### A lesson from Psalm 139

I have a good friend who has rejected Christianity – it didn't make sense to his rational way of thinking and it was too restrictive and arrogant in its moral demands – he's a good man – he makes good contributions to the welfare of this creation – he has no more harmful ways in him than any of the rest of us, and fewer than most – now, I'm sure his refusal to accept that God is still with him and still wants to persuade him to be in a more conscious relationship with the community of the Trinity has not stopped God from working in him and on him to reform his thoughts and lead him more deeply into the ancient ways – maybe, just maybe, some of our conversations over a beer and a burger after golf will be used for that purpose – nothing apparent yet, but we continue to talk – and I continue to pray for him with gratitude for his provocations that God uses to search me and my limited vision - and with hope that his rejection of a distorted image of God might be reformed into something close to the image that we have on the screen this morning – a welcoming, forgiving, reconciling parent/friend who knows us so deeply and who wants to lead us further and further into the ancient ways of justice, kindness, and humility

### Provocative points to ponder – as always, too many to cram into one sermon

- This searching seems kind of creepy at first glance - when you sit down, when you rise up, everything that you think – ughhhh! – but that's not the picture of God the whole Bible portrays, especially as we see that God in human flesh in Jesus Christ – no, this is a God who will go to any lengths to save us from ourselves – from the complicated nets of harmful behaviours that we have contrived generation after generation, as we try to turn ourselves into gods – and it's so easy to get caught up in the excitement of that arrogance – until the Spirit whispers in our ear, in the midst of our despair, or shouts in our face, in the midst of our insolence, that we have been searched by God's love and are being invited to live differently, are being led into ancient ways of loving God, others, and ourselves – God searches us in reconciling love, seeking ways to break through the

harmful patterns of behaviours in which we are enmeshed and convince us of the benefits of following the way made clear in Jesus

- There are parts of this psalm that disturb me – especially the parts about hating those who reject God as our enemies – but I weigh these sentiments of the community that composed the psalm against the teachings of Jesus, and realize their desire for revenge, however justified it might have seemed, is challenged and corrected by your searching love in your living Word, Jesus Christ – that’s how it works, isn’t it? – you know us so deeply and understand our limitations so well that you can acknowledge our rebellious impulses, not condemn us forever for them, and love us back into your way

### **How does this all relate to our witness as a fellowship of the friends of Jesus?**

The friend I mentioned at the beginning of this sermon has never been to church here – maybe someday, for some reason – but if he comes, I’ll be confident that he will find a welcome, a wonder, a wisdom, and a witness here at Brentwood that might just open up some new ways of thinking about God and acting with God – it won’t be the God he rejected – it will be the God who has been revealed in Jesus Christ and who searches us with the love of Jesus – a God of justice, kindness, and humility who works in persistent and persuasive ways to bring all God’s children home to the love that gave them birth in the first place, to the love that has surrounded and searched them all their lives, and to the love that will make the night as bright as day

### **My Notes**

### **My Prayers**

