

A Greater Glimpse | Majestic & Friendly

Psalm 139

Introduction: Two Thieves

Maybe one of the most famous scenes in all of scripture. Jesus, already having endured the most stinging humiliation and beating at the hands of those whom he created with the words of his own mouth, has been nailed to a cross. His skin torn from his body by the 39 lashes — executed with a whip covered in broken glass, sharp stones, and bone fragments — and covered in blood, he hangs naked suffocating. Suffocating? Yes, Crucifixion was the gruesome form of capital punishment the Romans perfected in which the sentenced person is forced to push up the full weight of his body on the nail that had penetrated his feet in order to exhale the air from his lungs. The victim eventually dies of suffocation. This is where we get our word, excruciating.

In front of Jesus stands a few women and only one of his disciples, John, watching with the most dreadful turmoil as their son, dearest friend, advocate, rabbi, and Messiah slowly dies. Surrounding this small band of the faithful are Roman soldiers who are celebrated by the religious elite, the teachers of the law, the scribes, and the Pharisees. It's been a long three-years, but they have finally prevailed over this rabbi who made them so hot under the collar. These men are the most highly trained theologians on earth. They have memorized much of the Old Testament, the Hebrew bible. They are the ones who have been stewarding the word of God, the people of God, and the temple of God. They are Israel's watchmen. But they have made a grave error — an error that will lead to their eternal damnation. They have colluded with pagan Rome and crucified the Lord of Glory.

These aren't Jesus' only accusers. Jesus is flanked by two other crucified men; thieves whose presence is intended to only further humiliate him. The King of Kings butchered with criminals. One of these criminals is described in Luke 22:39 as "railing" at Jesus. He was uncontrollable; enraged. In a fit of insanity as his life was growing dimmer and dimmer, he threw in with those who hanged him. "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" he screamed. But he was rebuked by the other thief. "Do you not fear God?" he said. He proceeded to turn his weary head toward the Lord and said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Remarkable. Trained theologians didn't see Jesus' glory. Men who were professional students and teachers of God's word. Yet a convicted felon sentenced to death was able to gaze upon Jesus in his most vulnerable, unimpressive, humiliated state and he didn't see a fraud like the

others. He saw God. “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Your *kingdom*? To have a kingdom means the possessor must be a ruler. And that ruler must be seen as having authority; strength. Everyone else saw a feeble, helpless man. An ordinary man. But this convicted, repentant criminal saw authority. Strength. Power. He saw a King.

Which thief are we most like?

We want you to see this King, as well. We want you to get a greater glimpse of the glory of Jesus and realize how truly beautiful he is. How worthy he is — so worthy that you would devote your whole being to his will. Today, we are contemplating **the MAJESTY of God...**

The death of greatness...

- Majesty comes from the Latin, meaning greatness. But greatness is a word that has lost luster...
- The Golden State Warriors are pursuing “greatness” this season
- Muhammed Ali: “I am the greatest!”
- The Alabama Crimson Tide have set the mark for greatness in college football
- People often respond to the question, “How are you?” with “I’m doing great.”
- We even proclaim how great God is, yet such a claim is rarely accompanied by authentic adoration (consider how stoic many of our evangelical worship services are...)

The Scriptures extol God’s greatness!

- Psalm 93:1 — “The Lord is clothed in majesty” ...or clothed in greatness
- Psalm 145:5 — I will meditate on the glorious splendor of your majesty (or greatness)
- 1 Peter 1:16 — Speaking of Jesus’s Transfiguration, Peter said he was an eyewitness of his majesty/greatness
- Hebrews 1:3 — “[Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the *Majesty* on high...”
- Hebrews 8:1 — Because God is so far above us in greatness, he is to be adored

How to Capture a Sense of God’s Greatness

- **J.I. Packer, Knowing God**
- **“Remove from our thoughts of God limits that would make him small.” — J.I. Packer¹**

¹ Packer, J.I. Knowing God. 75.

Text — Psalm 139: Removing Limits on God's Greatness

“...the psalmist meditates on the infinite and unlimited nature of God's presence, and knowledge, and power, in relation to men.”

1. I am always in God's presence (vs. 7-12). — we can cut off people we deem unfit for us, but we cannot do this with God: vs. 7-12

[7] Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?
[8] If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
[9] If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
[10] even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.
[11] If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,”
[12] even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.

2. There is no limit to God's knowledge of me (vs. 1-6).

[1] O LORD, you have searched me and known me!
[2] You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
[3] You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.
[4] Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.
[5] You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
[6] Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.

3. The complexity of our own bodies show us God's wisdom and might (vs. 13-16).

Facts about the human body²

- 60,000 miles of blood vessels in the average body — for every pound of fat or muscle gained, your body creates seven miles of new blood vessels;
- When you blush, the lining of your stomach blushes, too;
- The brain can read up to 1000 words per minute;
- The adult body is made up of **7,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 atoms** (Octillion)
- “Loneliness is physically painful. Just as you have a drive to avoid physical pain, you have a similarly powerful drive to connect with others and seek companionship - in order to avoid the pain of loneliness.”
- “Every 13 seconds, you produce more cells than there are people in the United States.”
- “Humans shed 40 pounds of skin in their lifetime, completely replacing their outer skin every month.”
- A sneeze generates 100mph of wind³

[13] For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

[14] I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.

[15] My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

[16] Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.

4. The only appropriate response is to exalt our majestic God (vs. 17-24).

[17] How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!

[18] If I would count them, they are more than the sand.
I awake, and I am still with you.

² <http://distractify.com/old-school/2014/07/20/amazing-facts-about-the-human-body-1197776387>

³ <http://www.medindia.net/facts/>

[19] Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!

O men of blood, depart from me!

[20] They speak against you with malicious intent;
your enemies take your name in vain.

[21] Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD?

And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

[22] I hate them with complete hatred;
I count them my enemies.

(But here's also what exalting God looks like...)

[23] Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

[24] And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!

But we're tempted think he isn't so great...

Consider one issue — political turmoil around the world:

- The dictator, Kim Jon-Un of North Korea, and his pursuit of advanced weaponry;
- The Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei, and the threat of him possessing Nuclear technology which his regime has claimed it would use to remove Israel from the map;
- The forces of ISIS which are growing daily by the thousands;
- Vladimir Putin of Russia who has invaded Ukraine — just 5-hours from where my dear friends, Bruce and Deborah Crowe, live on mission.

There are many threats in our world that are scary...

- Col. 1:16-17: *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. [17] And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

Our Majestic God Wants To Be Our Friend

"There is tremendous relief in knowing that his love to me is...based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me, so that no discovery now can disillusion him

about me, in the way I am so often disillusioned about myself...There is, certainly, great cause for humility in the thought that he sees all the twisted things about me that my fellow-men do not see...and that he sees more corruption in me than that which I see in myself...There is, however, equally great incentive to worship and love God in the thought that, for some unfathomable reason, he wants me as his friend, and desires to be my friend, and has given his Son to die for me in order to realize this purpose.” — J.I. Packer

Closing: How have you not trusted in God’s greatness?