

HE'S GOT YOUR BACK ~ Rev. Dora Sadler

Psalms 139:1-12

Summary: God knows all about us, yet loves us and protects us at the same time.

This morning is about reminding us - **God's got our back!**

I may have told you this story before. I read about it some years ago. It's about this man who decided to write a book about churches around the country. He began by taking photographs and making notes. He notices a golden telephone on the wall in the fellowship room with a sign above it that read \$10,000 per minute.

Curious, he found the Pastor and questioned her about it. She told him it was a direct line to Heaven and if he pays the price he can talk to God. The man thanked the minister and left. He moved on and visited churches in Ottawa, Quebec, Toronto, even Vancouver, finding more phones with the same sign and the same answer from the pastor.

Finally he arrived back again in Ontario. Upon visiting Carlisle, he saw the usual golden telephone. But THIS time the sign above it read 35 cents per minute. Fascinated, he talked to the minister (I think it was David Lander at that time), telling about all the other golden phones he had seen in other churches in other cities, about how he had been told it was a direct line to Heaven and how he could talk to God for \$10,000 per minute but here the charge was only 35 cents per minute. How could this be?

David smiled, and replied "my friend, you're in Kilbride and Carlisle now....it's a local call".

That's a funny story, and of course I've changed some of the details, but it makes a person think. Is God only located right here in both of our churches, and that's why it's a long distance call from anywhere else? I don't think so, do you? We don't keep God to ourselves. We're not an exclusive congregation. After all, God is "Omnipresent". That's one of those \$1.95 words that means God is "present everywhere at the same time". Another definition of "Omnipresence" is that we are surrounded by God's presence. This is what the Psalmist is referring to when he asks the questions in verse 7, "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, you are there".

God is everywhere. There is no place we can go that God is not there and has not been there, waiting for us to arrive. Remember Jonah? He tried to flee the presence of the Lord. The Lord goes "Psst, hey Jonah, you can run, but you can't hide. "If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

I think that in these turbulent, scary times, when we desperately live through a ruthless pandemic, as we see and hear of violence and unimaginable hate crimes, and tragic events, as some may question where is God in all of this, it is imperative to remember that it does not matter where we run to, how fast we run to get there, how many twists and turns we might make, how we cover our tracks, IT DOESN'T MATTER. God is always there with us. The New Creed affirms "We are not alone, we live in God's world".

We are to live with the knowledge that we are never alone, because we can take God with us everywhere. He is with us today, as we worship together, he will be with you in your car, as your drive home, or if you are on line he is there beside you. He will be with you in your job, or in your home, at the dinner table or on the golf course, in the garden, at the grocery store, in your walks or as you re-enter into restaurants as they open their patios. God will be with us when we're happy, sad, at all times, and in all situations. God is everywhere and he/she is always with us.

Another \$1.95 word is "Omniscience", which means God is "all knowing". God not only is with us at all times, he also knows everything about us. We are an open book before God, and God is a thorough investigator. "O Lord, you have searched me and known me." God knows everything about us. There is nothing that is hidden from God. I have to admit that there are times at night that I find it difficult to sleep, knowing that God knows the real me, he knows my imperfections.

As our scripture tells us - he knows when we sit down and when we rise up. He can discern our thoughts from far away. He searches out our path and our lying down and is acquainted with all our ways. He even knows what we say - even before a word is on our tongue.

Makes you, and me, think, doesn't it?

God knows the hairs of our head, our future, our past. There's a saying "Character is what you have when no one's watching" but just remember God is watching! He knows what we are doing and why we are doing it. I know that might make many of us uncomfortable, certainly it does me, at times. It might be a bit scary, but on the other hand, it's very comforting.

It is comforting that God knows us so well, so well that he can never forget us.

Can you think of someone in your life that really knows you? The best thing about having someone who really knows you is the sense of freedom it brings. We can be ourselves more with that person than with anyone else, because that person accepts us. A true

A friend is someone who knows all about us and loves us just the same. They know us and love us enough to try to help us improve to become a better person. That's the same kind of love that God has for us.

We all know that wonderful hymn that talks about that type of friendship "What a friend we have in Jesus", with the lines "Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer" and "in his arms he'll take and shield you, thou wilt find a solace there." God knows us, warts and all, and still loves us and will hold us close to protect us.

God created us. He put us together in his image. He knows where all the parts are and why he put them where they are. He created in us the ability to think, love, and learn. So it stands to reason that if God knows us this intimately, he can, and will, take care of us. God uses his knowledge of us to provide protection. "You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me".

In times of trouble, uncertainty, sadness - indeed at all times - let us remember that we are surrounded by God's protection "behind and before" - all the way round, we are covered.

It's kind of like in the old westerns, or the present day "Chicago P.D.", during the big gun battle someone, before moving to a new location to continue shooting, would always say "Cover me." And his buddies would then shoot furiously to 'protect' their partner as he moved. In today's world, the phrase "we'll cover you" has become "we've got your back". In other words we'll stick up for you, back you up, support you. And as much as those people love you, God loves you even more. He's got our backs.

Of course, when bad things happen, we wonder where is the protection? When there is darkness, we wonder where is God's light? When we believe in God's forgiveness, why can't we forgive ourselves? Even as we know God is the creator, why is there so much destruction? Even as we believe that God will protect us, why do we fear?

Let's just keep in mind - God's love and protection is mentioned all throughout the Bible. God had the Israelites' backs as they fled Egypt. God had Gideon's back at the battle against the Midianites. God had Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's backs in the fiery furnace. God had Daniel's back in the lion's den. God had David's back against Goliath,

Today's message is both simple and profound,

through 'thick and thin' as they say... remember always -

He's got **our** backs, too!