

Sunday, June 6, 2021 Psalm 139, 2 Chronicles 7:12-14 Luke 15:1-7

### Dangerous Prayers: Search Me O God

Have you ever felt that your life was in danger? That is, you were in a situation that presented itself with the possibility of suffering harm or injury? Recently I was travelling on the highway when I noticed a doe-a female deer on the left side of the road ready to cross in front of me. I slowed down as I watched her safely reach the ditch to my right. But then quickly I looked again and on the left side of the road was a young deer, a fawn with its distinctive spots. It was focused on its mother on the other side of the road. But then suddenly something amazing happened. This little deer knew it was in a dangerous position. It quickly crouched down on the road. I veered off to the right, honked my horn as I could see another vehicle coming up behind me. The sound of the horn alerted the doe to what was happening. The traffic stopped and immediately the fawn got up and hopped over towards its mother as the perceived danger was gone.

Danger is not something most people want to experience in their lives but there are people who are trained to enter dangerous situations when most of us would rather play it safe. Fire fighters and police officers are often in dangerous situations when unexpected events occur involving other people or something just gone wrong. The end resolution sometimes involves loss but often there is learning, growing and understanding of what went wrong and a means of preventing what occurred from happening again.

Craig Groeschel challenges us in his book, Dangerous Prayers to push ourselves to a deeper prayer life even though it may be out of our area of comfort as we pray to God for others and especially ourselves. The subtitle states: "Because following Jesus was never meant to be safe". So the question being asked is how you would define your prayers? Are they safe or dangerous? Are you risking anything by asking God to bless your leftovers at supper, or are you asking God to ensure that hungry people in our world are being fed at all? Do you risk asking God for help and then not letting one actually in to help you? God uses people to share hope in these days but are you willing to receive this message? Or, in the midst of a difficult situation, do you sit like the fawn on the road and hope the car will stop? That is, do you risk loving others more than yourself? Are you willing to stretch your faith, expand your hearts to open your life to God? Are you will to put a little fire into your prayers to God so that the Spirit of God will touch you in new ways? This is what occurred that Pentecost Sunday long ago and still occurs to those whose hearts are willing to listen to their heart as the Spirit calls us to pray.

King David was a faithful follower of God, most of his life yet he did what many of us do regularly. He questioned God, he complained to God, he petitioned or bargained with God. and at one point he cries out in prayer "How long Lord?" How long will you not see me or see that I am wrestling with my thoughts each day. How long will it be until you see me for who I am? (Ps 13:1-2) Do you dare to pray like David? Yes, these words are his prayer to God and he is asking God to help him. How does God see you? Does he see you as the one who you see in the

mirror yes, but more importantly he sees you for who you may become through faith and trusting him with your whole life.

David was called a man after God's own heart by the prophet Samuel who had anointed him king. David was devoted to God's will, worshiped passionately, gave extravagantly and led courageously. Yet he sinned. Even he knew that he sinned and so when he prayed this dangerous prayer—he knew that there would be a response from God a response which would change his life. He dared to ask God "Search me O God. Look at my whole life and see me as a whole person. It is his dialogue with God and God is listening to everything that is in your heart even those things no one else knows about. If you were to ask yourself this question, what could God reveal about you?

For many of us we would be reminded of our humanness that is the sins of the past as we hurt others for many reasons. We also see the sins which still are hurting us. As people we don't want to talk about what we bury down inside. But David's prayer, a dangerous prayer, directs God to "Search us" and show us who we are. Just think about the problems you have had in the past or maybe still carry. And when we ask God to do this, we also put ourselves in the position where we might even be crouching low and hoping that the danger will pass. But one thing is certain, we need God's help to see the sins of the past which are difficult to see in the mirror.

In 2 Chronicles, God told Solomon that all who are called his faithful people needed to take action in four ways—they were to 1) humble themselves, 2) pray, 3) seek Him, and 4) turn from evil ways. When we ask God to "search us", we are doing this. And if we do, then we will be forgiven of sin and God will heal us. This forgiveness and healing is what we need in order to grow in faith and to share and show our love.

How are you taking action for your life? What is on your mind today? Like many people across the country we wonder about the residential schools that took indigenous children from their homes to be educated in what the leadership of the day thought was a better way. Generations later we cannot fathom what this meant for these families and then to discover unmarked graves of children goes beyond our human compassion. Are we anxious about this discovery or indifferent? Maybe as we continue in David's prayer we will realize that saying and doing nothing is offensive and we need God to point out our flaws. And yes each one of us has flaws—I'm not talking in our bodies and their shapes and deficiencies, but looking at our hearts and what truly makes us who we are. Ethics, spiritual ecumenism, teachings of faith and basic human socialization is learned in very small ways but are we willing to look at what we have learned and toss out what is not right? God will help us in this but we must trust him to do this because he truly loves us for who we are.

In Luke 15 Jesus is in the presence of tax collectors and sinners when he tells the story of the lost sheep. Others listening to him including Pharisees and scribes who grumble and denounce those who are around him. Jesus asks a simple question about sheep care—that is

whether a shepherd would leave 99 sheep who are safe and well to go and find the one which had wandered away. When he finds it he carries it on his shoulders. He is so happy that when he goes home he tells his friends and neighbours to come and be glad for him that the lost sheep was found.

The parable of the lost sheep illustrates the depth of God's love for us. We are like that lost sheep- one out of 100 or however many are present and hearing these words in this moment in today's world out of 7 billion, for whom God is searching. God knows there are many people who are lost to the interests of power and money and self righteousness in the world. But when we offer this dangerous prayer "search me, O God" we are asking God to find us, save us and look at us so that in time we will rejoice with him.

When we share these words we are also asking God to examine the things we have done wrong, bad habits, even the approval of people ahead of God's approval or may be even wanting to be liked by people more than truly experiencing God's love.

We are also asking God to be guiding us as we embrace whatever life has in store for us. God sees you, knows your heart and through faith God will be with you after you pray this dangerous prayer which may cause you to wonder about your life. But wherever you are weak, God's strength is there. God will comfort you wherever you are hurting and when you are tempted to turn away, God's grace and love will give you a way out.

When you share the words of Ps 139 God hears them and will do as you ask. Take a risk and venture out into the deep waters of communication with God. From your greatest fear walk into a stronger faith. Embrace you deepest need and let it drive you to depend on the Good Shepherd. There is no need to crouch down in faith. God sees you, knows you and loves you. Let us pray.

Search me o God Know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me. Lead me to life everlasting. We ask in faith and with hope. Amen.