

Angela Pound

Spring Cleaning

Who has a junk drawer at their house? I think we can all say, we have a drawer or a space, where we put everything, that we think we need, but we don't really know, and for how long or how often, who knows?

Right after I finished my last class and submitted my last assignment, I let out a big exhale. Not literally, I don't think, but I didn't realize that I was holding my breath for so long, but life had gotten busy, too busy, without me even realizing it. What was one of the first things I did when I hit that submit button on my last assignment? I came home, saw the house in a disarray and started spring cleaning. I needed to get some "space" in my life. I looked around the house and saw all the little bits that had accumulated over the last number of months. Things that had just not been moved as I was working, studying, and driving kids to various activities. Shortly there after I went on a Pastors retreat for 4 days, where we had 26 hours of silence, which did the mind and spirit good. I needed to create "space" in my life outside of my home as well. The next three weeks we're going through a series titled, Spring Cleaning: Renewing Our Life with Christ. This isn't about polishing ourselves up for God. God doesn't need us to be in a certain

way to come to him. It's about responding to what Christ is already doing in us, sometimes without us even realizing it. It's not "try harder" but more "make space for what God wants to renew." It's about reflection and self-understanding through Christ.

I like what what an individual wrote, they said, "Self-understanding is not a human achievement; it is a divine gift. We are made in the image of God; we are gifted for communion and community; we are empowered for rational reflection and righteous obedience; we are made for worship and work. The genesis of soul-making lies not in our ourselves but in our creator and Lord. The self-centered world of our own making is nothing compared to the God-centered world of creation and eternity. I am not my own, and that which is most dearly 'me' is not mind. We say with the apostle, 'By the grace of God I am what I am' (1 Cor 15:10)."

Our first week, is on taking inventory - what's really there? Before anything can be renewed, the drawer has to be opened...we need to honestly see where we are, what "junk" have we accumulated that is getting in our way with our relationship with Christ? We can sometimes avoid spiritual inventory because it's uncomfortable. Scripture invites us to ask God to search us—not to condemn us, but to reveal what's true. This is less about guilt and more about clarity. Who we are and to whom we belong is

critical when it comes to our relationship.

Today we read Psalm 139; one of my favourite Psalms, a prayer, with petitions, as we hear one in verses 23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” It’s also a prayer for help, celebrating the reality of being known by God, and so also a prayer of trust. It’s a beautiful piece of poetry. Poetry invites emotion. Poetry lets us express something real without over-explaining it.

“During her TED Talk in 2014, Cristina Domenech reflected on the poetry workshop that she taught to the inmates of the 48th penitentiary in Buenos Aires. She says, “I remember a verse by a tremendous poet, a great poet, from our Unit 48 workshop, Nicolás Dorado: as he wrote ‘I will need an infinite thread to sew up this huge wound.’ Poetry does that; it sews up the wounds of exclusion. It opens doors. Poetry works as a mirror. We can recognize ourself, and look at ourselves in the poem....” Psalm 139 functions in much the same way: it has the potential to sew up wounds, to open doors, to create mirrors, and to help listeners recognize themselves in ancient, alien words.”

Psalm 139 is one of the clearest places in Scripture where God’s nature is described in deeply personal terms. He is omniscience, knowing us completely. We hear this in in the first four verses, which I’m going to read from the Passion

translation, “Lord, you know everything there is to know about me. You perceive every movement of my heart and soul, and you understand my every thought before it even enters my mind. You are so intimately aware of me, Lord. You read my heart like an open book and you know all the words I’m about to speak before I even start a sentence! You know every step I will take before my journey even begins.”

He is omnipresence, always with us as we hear in verses 7-10 “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where could I run and hide from your face? If I go up to heaven, you’re there! If I go down to the realm of the dead, you’re there too! If I fly with wings into the shining dawn, you’re there! If I fly into the radiant sunset, you’re there waiting! Wherever I go, your hand will guide me; your strength will empower me.”

He is omnipotent, all-powerful and omnificence, creating us intentionally as we heard in verses 13-16 “You formed my innermost being, shaping my delicate inside and my intricate outside, and wove them all together in my mother’s womb. I thank you, God, for making me so mysteriously complex! Everything you do is marvelously breathtaking. It simply amazes me to think about it! How thoroughly you know me, Lord! You even formed every bone in my body when you created me in the secret place; carefully, skillfully you shaped me from nothing to something. You saw who you created me to be before I

became me! Before I'd ever seen the light of day, the number of days you planned for me were already recorded in your book." God is always at work.

I want to focus on David's response at the end of the psalm. As we heard in verses 23-24 ("Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"). It sounds similar to how David starts out this psalm. David is admitting to God that God knows him better than David knows himself. He needs God to search and know him. God knows the truth. We hear in Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse—who can understand it?" David is saying "Lord, give me a completely honest examination and evaluation. Hold nothing back. Tell it like it is! Tell me exactly what you see. Then, lead me and guide me in a different and better direction. Lead me in the everlasting way—the way that pleases you and the way that will endure forever." Does that scare you to ask God that? Do you want to hear it like it is?

David didn't just believe truths about who God is—he brought them into his own life and discipleship. God's character wasn't abstract or theoretical to him; it actively shaped how he grew and walked with God. Do you allow God's character to shape your growth and walk with Him? David knows that he will never be beyond the presence

and care of God. Not in a negative way like David feels trapped or wants to escape God. Not like Adam and Eve did after they ate from the forbidden tree and hid when they heard God coming, but David sees never being beyond the presence and care of God as deeply positive and comforting.

In Judaism, Psalm 139 is recited during the week of Parsha B'reshith, when the annual cycle of Torah reading begins with Genesis, commenting on both creation and fall. As Andrew Bonar says of this Psalm, “these words are not the utterance of the First Adam, slinking from sight behind the trees of Eden; but...the utterance of the Second Adam, dwelling in the blissful fellowship with God, which fellowship he would not for all worlds ever lose.”

David, after speaking all that God is, raises his head and asks to be seen. As humans, we are so small in the presence of God, but it is this relatization that embolden's his faith — he has no choice but to turn to God and speak on his own behalf. What often feels like God's distance or silence tends to replace the brief and rare moments when David truly senses His presence. This is where faith becomes essential. Faith takes those fleeting encounters with God and makes them real and ongoing in our lives. Through faith, David trusts that even when God seems absent, He is always present; even when God feels distant, He is near; and even though God is beyond everything,

David still encounters Him in every moment of his life. Faith holds onto those experiences of God even after they pass, so that His presence never fully disappears but always remains just within reach.

David doesn't say, "God, I'll clean myself up and then come to You." He says, "Search me." That's vulnerability. Because when we invite God to search us, we're giving up control. We're saying: "God, show me what I don't see." "Reveal what I've been ignoring." "Go deeper than I'm comfortable going." Most of us don't mind a quick glance at our lives... but we resist a deep inspection. Because inspection means: Facing motives, not just actions. Confronting patterns, not just moments. Admitting we may not be as "fine" as we say we are. But nothing truly changes until we are willing to let God look deeply. We cannot clean what you refuse to uncover.

David continues: "Know my heart... test me... know my anxious thoughts." As we know with spring cleaning, it gets messy before it gets better. You pull everything out of the closet—and suddenly the room looks worse than when you started. That's what spiritual examination feels like. When God begins to search us, He often reveals: Anxiety we've normalized. Bitterness we've justified. Pride we've hidden behind success. Hurt we've buried instead of healed. And this is where many people stop. We say: "That's uncomfortable. That's too much. I'd rather not deal with

that right now.” Avoiding the mess doesn’t remove it—it just hides it. God doesn’t expose things to shame us. He exposes them to heal us.

From Psalm 139, we recognize that the psalmist feels God’s presence intensely, but if we’re honest with ourselves, sometimes as readers, we can struggle to feel God at all. Some say faith helps people hold onto God’s presence even when they don’t feel it. Others add that most people only experience brief “flashes” of awareness of God—or sometimes none at all. Abraham Joshua Heschel goes further, suggesting that feeling God’s absence is actually key. A sense of spiritual loneliness can open a person to experiencing God more deeply.

In Abraham J Heschel’s book *God in Search of Man*, he talks about experiencing the absence of God. He talks about what feels like God’s distance or silence often replace brief and rare moments when we truly sense God’s presence. This is where faith becomes essential. Faith takes those fleeting encounters with God and makes them real and ongoing in our lives. Through faith, we trust that even when God seems absent, He is always present; even when He feels distant, He is near; and even though He is beyond everything, we still encounter Him in every moment of our lives. Faith holds onto those experiences of God even after they pass, so that God’s presence never fully disappears but always remains just within reach. In other words, even

when God feels distant, faith allows us to hold onto and live out the reality of His constant presence, making brief encounters with Him an ongoing experience. The key to feeling God's presence, says Heschel, is to feel His absence.

If we think to the creation story in Genesis 2, man begins alone and, recognizing that none of the animals are a suitable companion, experiences loneliness. That sense of loneliness is what prepares him to truly appreciate and recognize the woman when she is created. Heschel suggests a similar process happens in our relationship with God: a person must first feel spiritual loneliness in order to become open to sensing God's presence. It is the feeling of absence—of being without God—that brings a person closer to the possibility of encountering Him. That is important for you to hear if you are in a time when God feels distant to you. While Eliezer Berkovits emphasizes faith as holding onto a known encounter. Heschel offers a more relatable path for those who feel distant from God: what matters is maintaining the desire for closeness, allowing that sense of longing and loneliness to take shape.

Psalm 139 still matters today, not because we all share David's intense experience, but because it models a journey: honestly wrestling with difficult thoughts about God can lead to a new perspective, where what once felt overwhelming becomes a source of comfort and meaning.

Not everyone feels what David felt in Psalm 139. Not everyone wakes up overwhelmed by the nearness of God. You may feel that sometimes... but other times not. I have been in both experiences in my life. During some of the most difficult times in life is when I have felt God the most...but I've also felt distance, and silence, and desired so much for that closeness again.

Some of us wonder if God is as near as Scripture says He is. But here's the truth that runs through everything we've just seen: Where you are is not the most important thing—what matters is the direction of your heart. David ends Psalm 139 not by claiming he feels God perfectly, but by praying: “Search me, God... know my heart... lead me...” David doesn't slam the drawer shut and pretend everything's fine. He opens it before God and says, ‘Search me.’

In other words: *“God, I want You—even if I don't always feel You.”* And that's the invitation for us today and always. Whether you feel close to God right now...or distant...or unsure...Do not lose the longing.

Longing keeps your heart open. Longing keeps you turning toward Him. Longing is what leads you to pray, to seek, to ask: “God, search me... show me... lead me...”

Don't wait until you feel something to respond to God. Respond now. In the silence. In the uncertainty. In the longing. This isn't self-improvement. This is God-led

transformation. Because the promise of Psalm 139 is this:

- It's not just that God knows everything – *He knows you.*
- It's not just that God is everywhere – *He is everywhere with you.*
- It's not just that God created everything – *He created you.*

We can't heal what we refuse to name. Spring cleaning with God is safe—because it's done by Someone who already knows you and loves you. We think we can hide, just like when we put things in a junk drawer and shut the drawer, but God knows. Or when we clean a cluttered room: At first, it feels overwhelming—maybe even worse when everything is pulled out. But slowly: You sort, you remove, you rearrange. And eventually: What once felt chaotic becomes peaceful. That's what God does with our hearts.

So ask yourself, Where do you avoid letting God look? What “rooms” in your life stay closed? What habits are shaping your spiritual life (for better or worse)? You are never outside His presence—even when you cannot feel it.

Let the prayer of verses 23-24 become your anchor:

“God, I may not always sense You...
but I want You.
Search me.
Know me.
Lead me.”

And be ready—

God doesn't just reveal... He invites you to respond and long. Because that longing—that ache, that desire to be near to Him—is not a sign that something is wrong. It may actually be the very place where God is already at work.