



*Relentless
Psalm 139:7-9*

*Third Sunday after Pentecost ~ July 30th, 2019
First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois
The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel, Jr.*

Text: Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or Whither shall I flee from Thy Presence? (v. 7)

Before I spoke a word, You were singing over me
You have been so, so good to me
Before I took a breath, You breathed Your life in me
You have been so, so kind to me
Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God
Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine
I couldn't earn it, and I don't deserve it, still, You give Yourself away
Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God.

That was the opening lyric of our first worship service in Minneapolis. It set the mood and the theme for the week.

The Gospel lesson was what we used the week before our annual Senior High Mission trip. This year we worked with Group Workcamps in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The video gave you a glimpse of our week away and the work. (Carrie Bottrell, Ellory Wahlfeld, and Anni Reinking - a youth and two of the adults that were on the trip - shared their reflections with you.)

While the summer theme was “Week of Hope”, the theme for the week was Relentless. Each morning, noon, and evening we reflected on a Bible passage and talked about what it means to have a relentless God. As I listened and reflected upon what I read, heard, and saw, I did what preachers do; I outlined sermons. Today and in the coming weeks I will share with you my insights in the hope that it will give you food for thought.

Tuesday morning we read the 139th Psalm, one of my favorite passages in Scripture.

O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me!
Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up;
thou discernest my thoughts from afar.
Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,
and art acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,

lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.
Thou dost beset me behind and before,
and layest thy hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high, I cannot attain it.
Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend to heaven, thou art there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!
If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there thy hand shall lead me,
and thy right hand shall hold me. (RSV)
Where could I go from your Spirit
Or where could I flee from your Presence.
If I ascend to heaven, you are there.
If I lie down in the shadowy land of death, you are there.

From the Garden of Eden to today, God relentlessly pursues us in order to have a meaningful relationship with us. From the time that Adam and Eve hid from God because they were ashamed of their nakedness, their vulnerability to today God calls our name much like a mother calls to her children when it is time for dinner.

In Luke's gospel Jesus told three parables about this relentless God. He said that God was like a foolish shepherd who would leave ninety-nine sheep behind in order to search high and low for the one lost sheep. In God's Kingdom, no one gets left behind. You are that lost sheep.

God is like a woman who loses a single coin. She turns her house upside down, looks in every nook and cranny, thinks and thinks where that coin might be and continues to look for that coin until it is found. You are that lost coin.

And God is like the patient father who waits for the wandering son or daughter who chased after the shiny objects of this world. God leaves the porch light on, night after night, hoping against hope that the "lost" child will finally come to their senses and remember not just who they are but more importantly whose they are. You are that lost child.

God is relentless in pursuing us. God's love for us is relentless. It never gives up. It is boundless. It is patient. God wants a relationship with us because, as St. Augustine discovered, our souls are restless until they rest in Thee.

The question that the participants in this year's mission trip wrestled with, that I wrestled with, and that I invite you to wrestle with is this - How relentless will you be in having a relationship with God?

To God be the glory. Amen.