

Psalm 139:9-10

Confirmation; May 17, 2015

Hold me fast, O Lord!

⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

In some ways, I think, that our society is becoming increasingly impersonal. More and more of the daily activities that used to involve contact with another human are being automated. For instance, some of us are old enough to remember the days before telephone answering machines and voice mail. In those days, when you called someone on the phone, they either answered or they didn't. And if they did, you would be talking with a real live person. It's kind of a unique idea – using a telephone to talk to someone? Even though I use texting and voice mail to communicate, there is a part of me that thinks: *Why don't you just call someone up? Why can't someone just walk down the hall in the office or workplace and talk to someone? Why can't you just talk to your neighbor of the fence?*

I understand that it is a convenience factor today. I get that. Yet, over time, we are losing personal touch with people. People don't know what is going on in each other's lives unless it appears on Facebook. How many of us know our neighbors, our co-workers and the people in our neighborhoods? It isn't just voice mail, texting or any other way that we may communicate with electronics. We often can go through a chunk of our day, without interacting with another human being, if we want. We fill our gas tanks with fuel, and pay at the pump. You don't need to go inside and talk to a cashier. At the grocery store, we can scan our own items and don't need to interact with anyone unless the scanner doesn't work. The ATM and computer have replaced the bank teller. The list could go on and on. As that happens, we become more isolated. We guard our information. We often guard ourselves. We don't want people to know everything that is going on in our lives. If we do let someone see into our lives, WE control the information that they see.

So, perhaps, the words of Psalm 139 are a bit scary. King David begins this Psalm with the words: **“O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.”** There was a time in David's life, when he didn't want the Lord to know him and his thoughts. Yet, as he is approaching the end of his life, these are comforting words for him. He recognized that no matter where he went in his life, he didn't go there alone. He went with the Lord. He wants us to know that we are never alone in our lives as well.

Today, 18 young people are being confirmed here at St. Paul's. Who knows where they all may go in their lives. No matter where they may go, they can take comfort in the words of our text: **“If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.”** Let us look at these words under the theme: **“Hold me fast, O Lord!”**

What do you fear in life? Everyone has some fear in their lives. We are afraid to fail. We are afraid to succeed. We fear change in our lives. We fear becoming so stuck in life that we don't change. We fear different stages in our lives. The young people who are becoming confirmed today are moving into a different stage in their lives. We are afraid of the darkness. We fear tomorrow. What will next year bring to us? We fear the doctor's office. Will the repair on the car be a small one or big one? We fear what people might think of us. Our lives are filled with fear.

This morning David says to us – *don't fear*. **“If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.”** God knows where we are at any time of the day. He knows where we are and what is going on in our lives ALWAYS. For King David, the sun would rise in the East and set on the far side of the Mediterranean Sea. Just as the sun would shine into the farthest corners of the world, so God would shine into the hearts of people everywhere.

My sinful nature doesn't like God shining into my heart. As the law of God shines in our hearts, it exposes the sin that is there. We find ourselves wanting to escape from God. We can't. That is where the comfort is as well. That's where the cross of Jesus comes in, doesn't it. That is why Jesus went to the cross. He went there to conquer Satan. He went there to pay the price for sin.

Through the eyes of faith, we trust that God will guide and hold us through every minute of our lives. **“There your hand will guide me; your right hand will hold me fast.”** We don’t travel this life alone. We don’t go through every day with our own power and strength. We go with God guiding us and holding us.

Yet, you’re going to have a powerful enemy try to take you away from God’s hold. Satan is going to try everything to distract you to take your eyes off of Jesus. Did you see the news report on NBC this week about how long the average attention span of a human being now is? According to a study by Microsoft about the effects of the digital world on human beings, the average attention span is now 8 seconds. That is 1 second shorter than the attention span of a goldfish. If that is true, then I have lost you all long time ago in this sermon. Seriously, think of all the things that Satan can throw at us in our life to distract us from God.

Danger is not always found in the catastrophic events that happen in our lives. Satan uses the small and subtle things to take us away from God. It is so often a slow drift away from God. He gets us to let go of God’s hand just a little bit at a time.

Is this world becoming less personal? Perhaps. Even though we may WANT people to be able to understand us and accept us, we often don’t let people see our personal side. Often we fear that if we do, others may not like us anymore. Take heart today that God can see your every thought, word and action. Even though he sees it all, he says to you: ⁹ **“If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.”** May the Lord go with each one of you all the days of our lives. Amen.