



**“DIVINE INTRICACY”**

**SCRIPTURE: PSALM 139**

**GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ASHEVILLE, NC**

**Sunday, January 14, 2024**

The Rev. Dr. Marcia Whitney Mount Shoop, Pastor

**Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18**

139:1 O LORD, you have searched me and known me.

139:2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

139:3 You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

139:4 Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely.

139:5 You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

139:6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

139:13 For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

139:14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

139:15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

139:16 Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

139:17 How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

139:18 I try to count them -- they are more than the sand; I come to the end -- I am still with you.

The Word of the LORD

**Thanks be to God**

Listen, children, to the story of your beginnings.  
Ours, all, everything.  
There has always been wonder  
Thunderous, hushed  
Lyrical, sweet, unrushed  
Brushed in deep strokes  
Of ethereal genius  
Careful details  
The threads of unique qualities  
Known, grown, never alone  
In their emergence  
All of you, all of me—  
we are not an accident  
We are sacrament  
Ordinary and holy inhabitant  
Of ancient impulses  
Temples of love's expression

These words, this song of creation is  
About you—the you that grows, that knows,  
That knew the pulse, the beginnings  
We were there when creation dawned  
The first breaths drawn, a dazzling  
Pantheon, a sweet antiphon  
Our birth began in primordial  
Immemorial, corporeal awe

That's the fearful part  
Awe and terror. Pain is not  
An error in design, it is  
The protector, the glue, the  
Viscera with capacity to connect  
Me and you  
Our pain is alive with truth  
Bodies need care, they arrive  
Laid bare—dependent, resilient,  
Able to respond to the subtleties of  
This planet we are on  
We come wired for connection  
Plugged in all the way

Our utter vulnerability so completely  
On display.  
No forethought, no consciousness  
Of self. Just here to be received  
At face value. Trust is not a choice  
It is Not learned, not earned, not yearned  
It's in us like oxygen, like organs,  
Like blood.

That plays, that washes away,  
That seeps and soaks the ground  
Profound, diffuse, loose.  
This is how we see right through the ruse.  
We are poetry, we are discovery  
We are secret, we are brash  
We are made for wisdom to savor  
to add flavor to the way that we live  
The way that we breathe  
the way that we learn  
the way that we grieve  
The way we can have the courage  
To believe  
that we there's a playfulness to this universe,  
but that doesn't mean it's a game,  
there are moments there are glimpses  
of so much we don't know  
there's so many ways for us to grow.  
There are some things that  
we will never ever know  
And that is the way it's supposed to be  
we're supposed to live  
we're supposed to swim in mystery  
we can never trace back to anything,  
By a generosity at the heart of the universe.

Divine fingerprints sometimes are too faint  
To see. It's too terrible, too wonderful,  
Too dissonant for we. Us humans, we live with  
This power, and so much of life  
teaches us to cower,

to grimace, to brace.  
To lose ourselves  
In some made up race, to a top  
that bottoms us out,  
that builds bombs and mass graves and  
Staves off our family connection  
—our kinship gets mistaken for aspiration,  
mere inflection of  
A world we figure will never be real.  
So we deal more in survival skill than life energy  
And joy.  
We hunker down  
and hide more  
than we deploy our dreams,  
our beauty, our ease, our love.

The revolution was seeded in our purpose—in our form.  
Pain is a messenger  
Pain is a way to create right relationship  
Pain tells us our boundaries  
Tell us when our bodies need to stretch and grow  
and when our bodies have been violated, harmed  
pain is the teacher  
the litmus paper  
pain is the barometer  
the thermometer  
the odometer  
of what the speed of trust feels like.

The story of you, of us  
is that we're made for compassion.  
Dominance is delusion  
A fear tactic, a way to hold on  
to a partial vision,  
An astigmatism of humanity  
that narrows our gaze  
that closes the gates of our hearts  
and our parts that simply need to be loved.  
That just want to be known  
that just want to belong.

The song of our creation,  
the song of our life, our death,  
our timelessness, our time boundness.  
This is a round, long song,  
mournful and elevating,  
joyful, simple and strong  
when defensiveness comes up  
when self-loathing circles  
your neuropathways,  
when an anxiety grips  
your ability to just be  
remember the song of you and me,  
your fearfully wonderfully madeness  
you're never not known by Godness  
your capacity to make and keep life  
in all its fullness  
in the most spare spaces  
your connection that's never broken  
to what's true about this world  
there's no need that can't be met  
by the provisions that we recognize  
like old friends  
that we were made to ingest and digest  
That we were made to cultivate and to share

Our gift is our capacity to notice  
the way sunlight hits the fence line  
as the morning just breaks  
the way the outline of a crescent moon  
tells us of a past and the future  
when she is full and bright  
the way the stars out number  
our imagination  
the way trees root themselves  
In Community and Rich soil  
The way birds are wired  
to be at home in the world  
not in one place,  
but in the expanse of movement,

and in the urge to respond to seasons  
by taking flight  
and trusting a destination,  
they may not know, but feel in their bones  
the gift of us is that we can set our intention  
That we can be changed by repetition  
that we can learn new renditions  
and remember old ones  
that shaped the ones who birthed us  
our gift is that we can learn about our limitations  
and we can learn about our aspirations  
in deep slumber  
In moments when we know things will never be the same

My prayer for you today, chosen family  
Is that you might find ways to remember  
the song of your beginnings  
that you might draw from this place  
when life gets hard  
that you might find within you the wisdom  
to not make life about you,  
but to let yourself be you  
and take up space in this place as yourself  
Not to try and win the race  
But to learn the contours, the beauty, the generosity  
of Grace

Thanks be to God.