

ORDINARY TIME; EXTRA – ORDINARY DAYS

Identity

Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18

- i. The new Disney Pixar animated film *Soul* depicts the inherent beauty of each individual created by God as the primary place of one's identity.
- ii. In a recent *Atlantic* article, the number one cause of family discord is no longer familial obligations but one's identity.

This text is a song with two stanzas celebrating the individual's connection to God.

- I. **STANZA ONE: GOD KNOWS US BETTER THAN WE KNOW OURSELVES** v 1-6.
 - a. Six times in these first six verses the writer addresses God as "You."
 - i. You have searched me and known me.
 - ii. You know when I sit down and when I rise up.
 - iii. You discern my thoughts from far away.
 - iv. You search out my path and my lying down.
 - v. You know it completely before I speak.
 - vi. You hem me in.
 - b. The general feel of these words is not fear but trust, not guilt but praise, not judgement but grace, not ire but love.
 - c. Before we know or name God, we are known and named by God. WHOA!
 - d. As the thoroughly known creation of God, we possess both an identity and a value that endures.
 - e. While God is thorough in knowing all things about each of us, we only know that God is wonderful and incomprehensible.
- II. **STANZA TWO: GOD IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED WITH US FROM BEFORE THE BEGINNING TO AFTER THE END** v. 13-18
 - a. If the first stanza is about us, the second stanza is about God. The knowledge of God is incomprehensible.
 - i. God's knowledge penetrates time and space.
 - ii. God's knowledge enmeshes spirit and matter.
 - iii. God's knowledge pierces light and dark.
 - b. It is easier to delude oneself than to elude God.
 - c. The comfort in this stanza is that no matter how hard we try we cannot fully understand another person, nor can they understand us, but God can and does and this is the most comforting expression of pastoral hope that there is.
 - d. Regardless of whether you identify as he or her, she or him, they or their, we are all known by God.

A Couple Connections for today:

1. The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is for our benefit, not God's. God always knew what it was like to be human.
2. Who am I? Bonhoeffer writing from Tegel prison.