

He Knew Their Thoughts

A question as we begin our consideration of these precious scriptures this morning . . . “Are your thoughts, those silent musings of your mind, completely private and secretive to you? Can anyone else know the things that you are thinking right at this moment, or even at every moment?”

Follow along with me as I read these words from Luke chapter 5, beginning in verse 17,

¹⁷One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick. ¹⁸Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. ¹⁹When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. ²⁰When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

²¹The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

²²Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ²³Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? ²⁴But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....” He said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” (Luke 5:17-24)

Through the years, as my wife and I have grown closer in our relationship with each other, she not only is able to perceive my moods and attitudes, very often she perceives the very thoughts that I’m thinking. And that seems to be a common thing between lifelong mates.

But that kind of ordinary perception is not at all the kind of perception that is spoken about here in this passage. Listen again to these words! Verse 22,

²² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? (Luke 5:22)

Over and over again, we are reminded that while Jesus truly was like you and me in every way, a “Son of Man”, He was also very different. He had power and

authority and ability that was far beyond that of ordinary men. He was the very Son of God. And not only that, Jesus also had the presence of both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit abiding within Him.

And it's essential that you and I are always careful to remember that Jesus had that very special difference, else we might find ourselves drifting into the same trap that many of our modern-day churches have found themselves in, that of having a God who is too much like us and not enough like God. Folks, whole new church organizations are being formed around that sort of theme . . . that Jesus is "like us".

May I give us a big word to consider. You may not have to remember the exact wording, but it would be good to remember the concept. The word or words that the Bible Scholars use for this current trend is "postmodern relativism", a big name, but with a simple purpose.

Postmodernism rejects the idea that the same moral and spiritual codes and values given within these scriptures should be acceptable to every person, but rather insists that values and codes of conduct should be relative to each person individually and relative to the circumstances that they involve themselves in. In other words, no specific set of values exists. Everyone is able to determine their own preferences in the values they choose.

And many people within the churches have adopted that trend, earnestly and sincerely thinking that it will make Christ and Christianity more relative to each person, and more acceptable to them, and then perhaps more people will be drawn to attend their churches. But folks, that manner of thinking is very, very misguided. And may I say that for those theologians and preachers and Sunday School teachers and parents who have gotten caught up in teaching those concepts, none of those concepts are found in these scriptures.

Yes, Jesus truly was human, in every way. But along with His humanity, He was also, in every way, the Almighty God, the Holy and Righteous God who created the earth and everything in it, and who is now the one who by His own might and power keeps it functioning, every moment of every day.

And though Jesus is the kindest and most gentle Bridegroom and lover of our souls, intimate with each one of us who have received Him as our Savior and Lord, He is ever and always our Holy and Almighty God, worthy to receive honor and worship and praise. And we absolutely must honor and worship and praise Him in that way!

God spoke about that very clearly in words given through the Apostle John. In chapter 5 of the Book of Revelation, John was transported to heaven and given a special vision of the Lord Jesus. And there, John tells us that

¹¹Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power
Be to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!” (Revelation 5:11-13)

Folks, I must confess to you that I grieve for the condition of our modern-day churches in America. In their misguided desires to reach out and be inclusive and to receive, without question, whomever will come, bringing in misguided people who will bring with them all forms of misguided ideas and behaviors of the pagan world into the sanctuary of our Holy God, bringing misunderstanding, and severely corrupting the Holy and righteous covenant that our loving God has made with us.

In all their many efforts to be inclusive, our church leaders have left their first love and have moved on to a kind of Christianity that is not found in these scriptures. This new religion of theirs is far more like that developed in the Land of Canaan as God's people violated His commands and intermarried with the local pagan residents and allowed the local pagan people to bring in elements of their pagan religions with them, interweaving those pagan beliefs and practices into the pure and holy commands of God corrupting the very core of God's Holy truths.

Or even as was done in Jesus' day by well-meaning Scribes and Pharisees who with all their man-made rules, substituted a set of good principles for God's intended intimate love with a personal Savior.

And that is a very dangerous kind of religion to have, because it substitutes so cleverly for the real thing. With that kind of Christianity, we are in danger of

becoming what Jesus called, “white-washed sepulchers”, tombs with dead bones in them.

I pray that God will guard this church and you and me from drifting into that kind of misguided religion.

Jesus was a man, yes, but far more than that, He was the Almighty God, one and the same with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

And because Jesus was Almighty God, when we read in verse 22, that Jesus knew their thoughts, we can know that, no, it was not that Jesus perceived their thoughts as you and I might, or perhaps caught a look of unbelief on their faces or heard them grumbling between themselves. Jesus was, and is, the Almighty God, and He was able to know the intimate and hidden thoughts of any and all of the people gathered there that day.

He knew the thoughts of those Scribes and Pharisees. And later, He would know the thoughts and the faith of the men who brought their friend to Him to be healed.

He knew that these poor, ill-equipped Scribes and Pharisees were trying to use the only thing they had available to them, their common intellect, to reason out a deeply spiritual matter that was taking place in front of them, and that would not work at all.

Listen again beginning in Verse 21,

²¹And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

²²But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts? (Luke 5:21-22)

Consider the plight of these Scribes and Pharisees for a moment. They had never witnessed such a thing before. And they were trying desperately to understand it with just their human reasoning capacity, but they could not.

What appeared to them to be just an ordinary man was making a profound declaration about Himself, a declaration that He was Almighty God in human flesh. He made that declaration by saying to the crippled man, “Your sins are forgiven you.”

Both Jesus and those Scribes and Pharisees knew very well that only God could forgive sins. And equipped with only their common senses, those Scribes and

Pharisees had to decide whether this man was a charlatan or that He was the God who could forgive sin. And they arrived at the only answer common “reasoning” would provide, and that was that Jesus must be a blasphemous heretic.

Fortunately, Jesus knew every word they were thinking, and He very carefully answered their doubting questions. Listen!

²²But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts? ²³Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk’? ²⁴But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the man who was paralyzed, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” (Luke 5:22-24)

Folks, this is the powerful message that you and I must receive from this passage of scripture. **God knows our every thought!** He clearly demonstrates that for us here in these words, and if we will only take the opportunity to search it out, we will see that He did the same thing on many other occasions throughout these scriptures.

Recall that when the Lord visited with Abraham and Sarah on His way to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord told Abraham that Sarah would soon bear a child. When Sarah overheard the Lord’s words from inside her tent, she laughed within herself at His words. Listen to that account from Genesis chapter 18!

⁹ . . . (the Lord) said to him (Abraham), “Where *is* Sarah your wife?” So he said, “Here, in the tent.”

¹⁰And He said, “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.”

(Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) ¹¹Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. ¹²Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”

¹³And the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a *child*, since I am old?’ ¹⁴Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”

¹⁵But Sarah denied *it*, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. And He said, “No, but you did laugh!” (Genesis 18:9-15)

The Lord knew Sarah's thoughts. Folks, you and I need not spend our energies trying to make God relative to ourselves. He is truly different, and we need to embrace that difference and not try to reduce Him down to someone lesser than He is. Such efforts will lead us into serious error.

In Isaiah chapter 44, we can read about a man who cut down a tree, and with his carving instruments foolishly attempted to fashion out an image of God.

You and I must never do that, to try to shape and fashion God into any image that we can know, especially into the image of common man. By doing that, we greatly dishonor Him.

He is God, and as God, He is capable of being and doing things that we cannot do, and that ought to be alright with us. We must not demand the privilege of being able to "reason" Him out.

God's ways are not our ways. He has majesty and power and knowledge that we do not have; and that includes knowing every thought that comes to our minds.

I would like to spend our last few minutes of time today by our "meditating" on the words found in Psalm 139! And I would like to challenge you to reread and rethink these words in your private devotional time later, and often. Listen to these words in Psalm 139, beginning in verse 1.

- 1 O LORD, you have searched me
and you know me.
- 2 You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
- 3 You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
- 4 Before a word is on my tongue
you know it completely, O LORD.
- 5 You hem me in—behind and before;
you have laid your hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.
- 7 Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
- 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
- 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.
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

And then in verse 23 of this Psalm, we read,

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
24 See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:1-24)

These words tell us plainly that God knows each and every thought that comes to our mind, every one of them, long before the words come to our tongue.

Where can we go to hide our ways, our attitudes, our desires, our habits, our inmost thoughts from God? No where! No where!

That is why you and I must want to do "that which is right in His sight" in everything we think and say and do . . . because everything really is in His sight at every moment all of the time.

When I am by myself, hidden away in my study room or my workshop, or driving in my car, He knows my every thought and my every deed. Are some of my thoughts angry and bitter, or vile and vulgar? He knows them immediately and completely.

As men and women sit quietly and gossip about and belittle other people, God is right there, being forced to listen.

As women sit quietly in their chairs and read their "romance novels" with stories laced full of vile and sinful episodes. God is right there, being forced to listen to their thoughts.

As a man hides away in his closet or on his computer and looks at pornography, God is right there, being forced to share in every vile thought

Folks, do you, do I do any of these things? Perhaps we don't do these exact things, but we surely do other things like them. And as we do, we are forcing

God to join in with us in our wrong and sinful and sometimes vile and vulgar thoughts. And folks, it should not be! We are grieving the sweet and loving Savior who died to make us holy.

What then must be our response? God tells us in 2 Corinthians 10:5,
⁵casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

You and I must bring every thought that comes to our minds under captivity. If we do not take our thoughts captive, then surely our thoughts will take us captive.

May I say that again . . . If you and I do not take our thoughts captive, then surely our thoughts will take us captive.

Folks, the Spirit of our loving Lord Jesus knows every thought that we think. We must not, we dare not grieve Him with angry and bitter and vile and vulgar thoughts. We must bring "every thought into captivity".

May we pray!