Dangerous Prayers - Part One

# Search Me

# (Psalm 139:1-24)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. We’re starting a brand-new three-part message series this morning called “Dangerous Prayers.” My prayer this week has been for a greater sense of unity, a surge of faith, and to realization of the potential of prayer in the church through this message series. And I’m believing that as we experience the presence of God through his Word that we will be strengthened in the faith and begin boldly praying dangerous prayers.

Now, what I mean by dangerous prayers is that these are prayers of faith, not those little safe prayers like, “God, bless this food” or “Give us rest as we sleep.” But I’m talking about bold prayers, risky prayers, praying in the Spirit and storming the gates of hell. Prayers where we need God to move the heavens and the earth because we’re charging into enemy territory taking back what he’s stolen. Prayers where nothing is going to change unless God does something. And so, these are prayers that are dangerous to the kingdom of darkness, because they’re going to build you up, they’re going to challenge you to step out in faith, and they’re going to take you out of your comfort zone.

Over the next couple weeks, we’re going to talk about dangerous prayers. Next week, we’re going to ask God to break us because on the other side of brokenness there’s a greater sense of dependence and intimacy with God that can’t be found any other way. And then, we’re going to talk about a prayer of availability that says, “Here I am, send me.” It’s a risky prayer, a very daring prayer, a dangerous prayer that says, “I’m available.” And as we begin today, we’re going to look at a well-known prayer that most scholars have attributed to David and it’s found in Psalm chapter 139.

The title of today’s message, this dangerous prayer, is “Search me.” And we find within the verses of this Psalm, the Holy Spirit giving us a beautiful picture of God’s all-seeing eye watching over us with the intimacy of an all-knowing Creator. It begins with praise as David tells us of the inescapable presence of God, his intimate knowledge of us, and his providential care. In verse one he writes,

*“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. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord” (Psalm 139:1-4).*

*You hem me in — behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? (Psalm 139:5-7).*

*If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. 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. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you (Psalm 139:8-12).*

*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place (Psalm 139:13-15).*

*When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (Psalms 139:15-16).*

As I read these words, I love the image of the intimacy with which God sees us, but as we continue, we find that there is a shift in David’s thinking. Now, we don’t know exactly where David was when he wrote this Psalm as we do with some of the other Psalms, but apparently his enemies had made some hurtful accusations that caused David to cry out to God. In verse 17, I want you to notice the change in his tone.

*“How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men! They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord, and abhor those who rise up against you? I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies” (Psalm 139:17-22).*

And so, David begins this Psalm with praise reflecting on his inner thoughts and the revelation of the Spirit within him before suddenly making a shift that we see him make over and over again in the Psalms. He shifts his focus from praising God to dealing with men whom he identifies as God’s enemies and then just as suddenly he’s going to shift again in verse 23 where he says,

*“Search me…” (Psalm 139:23).*

One second he’s fussing and cussing about these wicked men, he’s like, “Go get ‘em, God. Do something about them.” And then in the next second, he swings back the other way, to suddenly address his own integrity. In fact, he’s going to take responsibility for his own anxiety; he’s doesn’t blame it on King Saul who is trying to kill him, but in verse 23 he points his finger at himself saying,

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me…” (Psalms 139:23-24).*

As I was preparing this message, I’ve been asking myself, “Why is it that I get anxious? You know, what causes me to experience anxious thoughts?” And I believe a lot of it is because of our culture, because we live in an age of anxiety, life is just so fast-paced, and many of us have the daily pressure to perform. I feel that pressure all week, because I know that no matter what happens Monday through Saturday, Sunday is coming. It doesn’t matter how many meetings I have, hospital visits, maybe a funeral or whatever, but what everybody knows and what visitors judge me by is my performance Sunday morning.

I wonder how many of you have experienced anxious thoughts this week? I mean, let’s be honest, fear, worry, or anxiety are force-fed to us through the channels, stations, and the sites that are supposed to be giving us information. It’s as if most of our media sources are using fear tactics to engage us in their own agenda, but what I love about David’s prayer is that he recognized that it’s not what’s happening out there that was making him anxious. He recognized that it was his own thought process, it was what he had allowed into his mind unchecked, it was those anxious thoughts that were creating that turmoil inside of him.

And so, he invites God to look inside and see if he’d been thinking in a way that had allowed the enemy to corrupt his mind. In other words, he says, “Maybe there are some ways in me that are making me vulnerable to those anxious thoughts.” And David was willing to get brutally honest with God, praying a dangerous prayer, asking God to expose any areas of impurity, those hidden sins, those places where he wasn’t fully trusting God.

## 1. Search Me, O God, And Know My Heart

And so, number one, we want to pray a dangerous prayer, search me, O God, and know my heart. Because we need God to expose those areas of impurity because we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror. David understood that he had a problem in his heart, and in the same way, we need to understand that the Bible tells us,

*“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure….” (Jeremiah 17:9).*

And so, we’re deceived into thinking that we’re good, that we’ve got this, and everything is okay, but it’s not because God tells us a different story.

That’s why David prays, “Search me, O God” because we don’t know our hearts. And yet, when you pray that prayer, God is going to show you things that need to go so that he can reclaim your heart. You see, it’s those things that you’ve allowed in your heart, that have not only captured your heart, but they’ve created a stronghold in your mind. You see, it’s that place in your mind where you used to make up things as a kid, where you used to use your imagination, and that place that was meant to be a playground where you could enjoy God has become a battleground so that you can’t even sense his presence anymore.

And so, you need to reclaim your heart, purging it of impurities, so that you can take the high ground of your imagination, taking captive every thought, because when Satan comes after you his goal is to set up a stronghold in your mind. You see, he’s coming after your destiny, he comes to steal, kill, and destroy, and he wants to make it so that you can’t even stand to be alone with your thoughts. Every time you begin to think, you worry so much about what might happen that you can’t even think rationally. And so, we want to pray a dangerous prayer, we want to invite God to search us, to see if there is any offensive way in us, so that we can get this thing turned around. You see, if we can take the high ground, if we can recapture our imagination, we’ll begin once again to experience the freedom that was purchased with the blood of Christ.

We’ve got to reverse the cycle of the way we’re thinking about things, no longer captive to those anxious thoughts, not waking up in the morning being concerned about the latest news, worrying about everything that could go wrong, but we want to dedicate ourselves to God and commit our hearts and our minds to him. You see, we want to be free to dream again, to walk around singing, and using our imagination just like we did when we were kids, because we’ve got dreams to dream and visions to see.

The future is ours and so we want to invite God to show us areas of impurity so that he can bring us into a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit, transforming us to become more like Jesus. Search me, O God, and know my heart is a dangerous prayer. It’s a prayer that can make you so much closer to God, but that’s not it, David is not finished, he’s going deeper.

## 2. Test Me And Know My Anxious Thoughts

Number two, he prays, “test me and know my anxious thoughts” which is basically another way of saying, “God, show me where I trust you the least.” And this is so important, because so often we find ourselves getting out of balance, we’re anxious and stressed out because we’re giving too much value to the wrong words and not enough value to the right words. We’ve got all this technology, you know, you’ve got this feed on your iPhone, your android, your tablet, or your laptop. It’s with us wherever we go, and so there is this constant flow of information, but everything comes across that screen the same size.

And so, we live in this constant state of anxiety, because we naturally assume that everything we see carries the same weight. You know, it’s all worthy of our attention right now, and so there’s your Bible app, your newsfeed, your emails, your Facebook, Snapchat or whatever and you haven’t learned how to prioritize. You’ve got to learn to find a balance, that’s where David was going in verse 23, “test me and know my anxious thoughts” he says. And this is so important because we all have things that keep us up late at night, things that make us anxious, things that we worry about.

You know, for some of you, you’re worried about losing your job, you’re afraid of failing, afraid of loss, and yet it’s those very things, it’s those anxious thoughts that reveal where you trust God the least. And that’s why the Bible says,

*“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 Timothy 6:17).*

But some of you are lying in bed at night worrying about something that God has already worked out and if you could find balance, if you would give value to the promises of God, giving weight to the right things, you’d have a peace that transcends all understanding, because you’d have a clear sense of priority in your life.

You see, when you put value on the word of God, when you prioritize what God said, you will find that he is that solid rock on which you can stand. And David said it best, he said,

*“You are my rock and my fortress. For the honor of your name, lead me out of this danger. Pull me from the trap my enemies set for me, for I find protection in you alone. I entrust my spirit into your hand. Rescue me, Lord, for you are a faithful God” (Psalm 31:3-5, NLT).*

David knew the faithfulness of God, he knew that he was a rock of protection, but if you don’t know how to stand on that rock, if you don’t have the right balance, the devil is going to push you around and you’re always going to feel anxious and unsettled.

And so, he prays, “Test me and know my anxious thoughts” because when you make up your mind what really matters, you’ll begin to get your balance back, you’ll begin to see things as they really are, and you’ll recognize this doesn’t matter and this does matters. You will recognize that the important thing is that you keep your faith, that you have an attitude of gratitude, and that you don’t let your situation contaminate your Spirit.

You see, if we allow ourselves to become overwhelmed with worry, fearful of this or fearful of that, fear itself will keep us from being obedient. Fear will keep us from walking in faith and we want to please God, but without faith it is impossible to please God. And so, we want to find balance, walking in faith, pleasing God, and not being held captive by those anxious thoughts. We want to trust God knowing that he hasn’t given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7, NLT).

And so, if you’ll be bold enough to pray this dangerous prayer, “test me and know my anxious thoughts,” God will reveal areas where you haven’t really been trusting him. He will show you things about yourself that you haven’t been willing to acknowledge, areas where you’ve been deceived into believing that you are fine, but it’s not because deep inside there’s a root of fear.

## 3. See If There Is Any Offensive Way In Me

And so, number three, we want to pray, “See if there is any offensive way in me” because often our anxiety is the direct result of a compromise in our integrity. You know, how can you escape the anxiety when you’re worried that your wife is going to see that text message on your phone? How are you going to get to the root of this anxiety when you have three Snapchat’s, and the one your parents think is your Snapchat is just a decoy? You’re asking God to give you peace, but your life is fractured into so many different pieces.

David was committed to getting to the root of this anxiety, these anxious thoughts, and so he prayed a dangerous prayer, he said,

*“See if there is any offensive way in me…” (Psalms 139:24).*

It takes courage to pray this prayer, because God is going to show you some things about yourself that you’re not real proud of. But if you have the courage to be honest with God, asking him to point out any sin within your heart, this can be a game changer, because he will point out some things that you have tucked away, maybe tried to explain away or even deny. But this is where the promise of God become so practical, because if you’ll receive what he’s trying to show you, admitting that you have done wrong and desiring to change. The Bible tells us,

*“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).*

And so, this prayer is an open door to align our lives with what God created us to be because he sees beneath the surface level of our lives. And whatever it is that he shows you, there is always more grace, because you’re already accepted in Christ. He paid the debt 2000 years ago so that you wouldn’t be held captive by those anxious thoughts today.

David knew this, he rejoiced in the promise of Jesus, knowing that he’d been called, he’d been chosen, that God loved him and he didn’t have to prove anything to anyone. He knew that there was no reason to be anxious or to feel lonely because God had been there from conception and he would be there in every season of his life. And so, he wrote this Psalm from the perspective of knowing that God was watching over every stage of his life and he prayed with confidence,

*“Lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalms 139:24).*

Positionally, this prayer puts you in a place of great promise and unlimited potential. It’s a prayer of surrender that says, “You know me, you knit me together in my mother’s womb, and all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” And this is where real change happens, when we come into the presence of God, just being still before him, even lifting our hands. Taking that need, that specific area, and letting Jesus conform you, transforming your life, and leading you in the way everlasting.

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