

A masterpiece of the Master's piece

Psalm 139: 13-18

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Papaopiu gu withubo bensiam

The book of Psalms is a composite Psalm made up of a hymns, praises, prayers, laments, and confessions. Of all the Psalms, psalm 139 is one that best describes God's personal relationship with human beings. This is a prayer of David to God describing who our God is and how well He knows about us. As he meditates on God and His nature he was in awe, and writes what most ancient Jewish scholars call "David's most excellent Psalm". David knew his worth well and therefore in Psalm 139:13-18, he cried out to God praising who He is. David is proclaiming that God knew everything about him in advance the day he will be born and the day he will die (v.16). So when did God first get to know us well? He traces it all the way back to the womb. We heard a very similar thing from Jeremiah that, even before he was born God chose him, and was appointed as a prophet (Jer. 1:5). God's words tells us that from the moment of conception there is life created in the image of God and He ordains all the days of our lives before one comes to the world. Every life is precious as we are a gift from God. The verses focus on God's role in our lives from a time before birth.

Basing on these verses I have two things to ponder

God the skilful and the careful Weaver

(Pabensiam wibo khatdi Pamakum sukbo/Majaibo)

A weaver is someone who uses her creativity to make something beautiful. Materials are collected to bring the item into final form. For example, to make mekhalas we need chalang, tadiuniak, a painter needs brushes and colours, writer needs pen and notebook, carpenter needs wood, iron-nail, etc. Have we ever pondered, if without the lights, the artists mentioned

above could work out their masterpieces? Obviously we will either make mistake or injured. The womb of a woman is considered as the dark place. God designed the womb as a place of nurture (makuat khaibo) and protection (gukhaibo) for a child. It is amazing how God knitted each of us in our mother's womb. What beauty can come out of us if you and I are given a task to do without any light? God makes the most perfect work of all in the dark. God is very careful (pachun khaijiu) at work when he moulds each of us.

I came across a project called **“Psalm 139 project”** in *YouTube*. This project is all about putting an ultrasound in every pregnancy care centre. The rational (machun) behind this project is to make a mother or the couple see how their baby is weave together in the womb and also help to realize the worth of human beings. Scientists started to look at the body in a microscope and they were amazed that everywhere they look, they see weaving. With all the complexes of our human body it is amazing. As David says in v.14 our human intellect cannot imagine of how God put together the complex bones (206), joints (ara mathuk 360), nerves and cells (70 trillions) which we can and cannot see, and all our being perfectly. Have we pondered the crisscrossed lines in our palms? No two persons have the same fingerprints. Moreover, no two persons have the exact faces. One mother gave birth to different faces and personalities. Even identical twins are recognized by their personalities (*talkative, silent, dull, witty*). I have my twin sister but we look different and our personalities are also different (*Me talkative and she is silent*). A Factory/Company can produce thousands of their products exactly as the other one. (Car, Soap, Clothes etc.) But how creative our God is? Millions of people had lived and died, today there are more than 7.5 billions in the world but you will never get exactly like you though you may come across some similar faces.

Have you ever looked at yourself in the mirror and didn't like what you saw? Or thank God for His creation? When someone commented “you are beautiful” instead of saying thank you, many of us often say

“Nangruset/nsonsa” by saying this we disvalue God’s creation in us. Even when we know that God made us in His own image (Gen.1:27), many of us still feeling unsatisfied and compare ourselves with others (looks, abilities, grades, status) which leads to questioning our own being. I also complaint that I wish I am beautiful, hair, singing, house, cars like her. I feel better when I compare with someone who is weaker than me whereas I find no satisfaction in myself when I see people who are doing better than me. I often asked why me? But when I read through this passage (*Ps. 139*) again and again I find my worth within myself and it reminds me that I am unique. APJ Abdul Kalam said **“Do not compare yourselves to others, there is no comparison between the sun and the moon. They shine when it is their time.”** Someone said comparison is the thief of all joy (*mai nai phui kidabo ga nakhuga bambo chunwat se agatad mibo ye*). Comparison makes a person resentful, jealous and unproductive.

We don’t realize that all human beings are unique in our own way and we can never become one of them. I can’t be you, you can’t be me, and you are the original. Search the whole world there is no one else like you. By comparing with others many ends up disappointing themselves because they no longer see the uniqueness in them. David in his reflection he saw the Master’s piece in him. He knew his being as God’s creation and had no complaint of his appearance rather he wonders of God’s work and praise Him (v. 14b) *Nangniu kam khaibo hina masuang ha-e khatdi tasi-e*. He knew that his Creator will never make a mistake in creating him. Let’s count the worth of our life and being each day like David (v. 18).

Our Identity in the Image of the God

(*Aliu lun hai Tingwang gasu wangbo*)

Psalm 139 has been a source of knowing my own identity in God and has enabled me to value my life more than before. It has help me to accept of who I am. Time again it reminded me that I don't own my life and therefore I do not hold any rights to devalue myself. My life is special as it is a gift from God. In Genesis 1, we see how God created the heaven and the earth. When he made others he said it was good (five times) but after he made human in His own image He said it was very good (Gen.1:31). God places special value on human life because they alone are created in His image. Under the Mosaic Law, the murder of another person deserved punishment by death because of the value of life that was destroyed. ***“Chamainatu Tingwang lun kumjiu damkhai mibo-e, siniu mai khat kum boniu mai khat tu kamsat sai, patudi mai khat niu kam sat rabo-e” (Gen.9:6). You shall not murder (Ex. 20:13).*** God is the giver of life and He alone has the authority to take life. Sijeng niu maitu gibo, tanakam kiubo, suicide and anything that harms our body is against God's will.

In this fast changing world, identity crisis has become an issue for both young and old. Some try to find their identity in community, peer groups, while some try to find their identity through status, job and personalities. Abraham Wright says ***“Today many are ashamed to be seen as God made them...many buy artificial beauty to cover the natural beauty God has made them”***. For the sake of recognition or to identify them in the society people are ready to reform their structures through various surgeries (*Michael Jackson*), as they are dissatisfied with their own appearance and body. Men are tired of being man and wanted to be a woman, and woman are tired of being woman and wanted to be man. Transgender is very common now. People are willing to spent millions for surgeries (nose, eye, lips, chin, and body). Even in Manipur, eyelid surgery is very popular and advertises in TV giving an offer. Some mother did not breastfeed because it may distort the beauty of her body (especially celebrities).

Someone interviewed a terrorist and asked, “why was he doing such evil things”? He said, “I want to be recognised in the world but I had no other way”. I am not educated and don’t have any business of my own. So in doing this, the whole world will know my name.” People are not afraid to do anything in order to identify themselves. Today in a world of technologies, we like to identify ourselves of who we are in the society especially in social media like Whatsapp, facebook, Instagram, Tiktok and get the attention of others. It is very common especially among the youth that we pour out our joys and problems to the social media and not to God. Social Media has become their god. Therefore, many of us find no solution and peace of mind. When trying to identify themselves most of them become desperate and committed suicide, many people become violent creating problems in the society. Finding ones’ identity without God has no value and it will not last. We find real happiness in life when we find our identity in God. Let us stop asking, who are we? but ‘whose’ are we? only then we will get an answer because we are God’s being and in Him alone, we have our lives.

David towards the end urges us not to praise God for those extraordinary blessings like money, job, good house, positions but praise Him for everyday life (v. 18) and ***Psalm 3:5 “Eh niu nchun katheng kadun jibamdi Rapiu niu atu gukhai-e”***. (We Thank Thee-Jim Reeves) Do we ever thank God for each new Day? Not everyone is fortunate to face a new day. Some didn’t wake up from their sleep. Thank God for waking you up each day. It is God who give us life. ***Dinronmai 11:7 “Tingmik kawi daojiu nachun wisai sise kawi khatle.”*** We humans are weak without God. When God created fish, he spoke to the sea, when God created tress, he spoke to the earth but when God thought of creating man he said, “let us make man in our own image.” If we take out fish from water, it will die. If we take out tree from the soil, it will die. Similarly when man is disconnected from God, he dies physically and spiritually. He is the source of life. We must be connected to him because only in Him there is life.

God without man is still God but man without God is nothing. God do not depend on man for His survival but human does. May we all find our identity in God alone and always stay connected with Him. Let us praise God for creating us wonderfully. Let us preserve His Image and shine His glory into the world who are living in the dark side of this life without knowing the value of this life (Master's Piece).

May God bless us all.