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Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24

At the Movies: Princess Bride and God’s love

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Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24 New Revised Standard Version

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night’, even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you. Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Sometimes when the news from the week is so awful and horrifying, I want to escape. I want to pretend that I don’t live in a world where bombs fly in the Middle East and children are killed. I want to pretend that I don’t live in a world where we treat refugee children at our borders like they are inhuman. I want to pretend that I don’t live in a world where people shoot down a plane filled with 298 innocent people. And I am filled with such despair and disbelief that we as God’s people can be so hateful to each other. Some people might blame God, but we, God’s children, are doing this to ourselves. These are not natural disasters or acts of God, this is humanity, hurting and killing one another through direct assault, indifference, neglect.[[1]](#footnote-2)

Somehow we have forgotten that we belong to one another, that we are connected, that we are all sisters and brothers, that we need one another.[[2]](#footnote-3) What can we do? I feel hopeless. But I can advocate for peace and life. I can insist on the possibility of peace, and start with myself. I can pray for peace and the well-being of both Israelis and Palestinians and refuse to accept that war is inevitable or hate is natural.[[3]](#footnote-4) I can pray for the people in the Malaysian airplane and try not to be swept into a rage calling for revenge. I can make myself open to being an instrument of peace.[[4]](#footnote-5)

We live in a world where the God who created the universe and all that is in it created us. And God loves each and every one of us intimately. God has searched us and knows us; God knows our thoughts and ways. There is nowhere that we can go that God is not with us, there is no situation that we are in that God is not there.

The Princess Bride for me is a movie that reminds me that we are connected, that we need one another, that love exists. It begins with a little boy who is home sick for the day, and his grandfather is going to read to him a story.

Begin Princess Bride clip at 1:00 minute. End at 5:42.

When Westley and Buttercup reunite later in the movie, Westley is in disguise and Buttercup pushes Westley down a hill as Westley cries out “as you wish…” Buttercup realizes that it is her beloved Westley and she rolls down the hill to meet him. In the Princess Bride there are pirates and giants, sword fights, and rodents of unusual size. And for our heroes, Westley and Buttercup, true love is the ultimate goal. Love is something to be fought for, something to never doubt, something that is special.[[5]](#footnote-6) As we saw Westley say to Buttercup, “Do you think this happens every day?”

Westley expresses his love and his devotion to Buttercup with the words, “as you wish.” In the Bible there is a very exciting book called Song of Solomon that is thought to be words from God to God’s people. In Song of Solomon 8:6 it says, “ Set me a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.” Human love is not perfect, it will fail, but God’s love for us never fails.

As the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8:38-39, “ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We may doubt the presence of God or the love of God, but when we have doubt may we know that God is patiently pulling us back in until we are able to believe again.

Now, God’s love does not promise that we will not get hurt. We live in a human world. Westley says in the Princess Bride, “Life is pain. If anyone tells you otherwise they are selling you something.” God’s love promises to stay with us until the end. God created and cares for each one of us. When there are 99 sheep, God is going to look for the missing one, number 100.

There is a cemetery in the Channel Islands just north of France that is dedicated to the unknown dead of World War II where the remains of soldiers have been buried. No one knows exactly who is buried there. No one knows what birth date or death date to inscribe on the headstones. No one knows the names. But across each gravestone are inscribed the words “Known by God.”

There is no more need to hide because all is accepted. All that is within us is already known and embraced. May we hear God expressing God’s love for us today. Whether that is with words or actions or beauty or nature or art or music.

O Lord, you have searched us and known us. We are fearfully and wonderfully made and known. Where can we go from your spirit? Where can we flee from your presence? Nowhere. Thank you, God. Search us, then, and know our hearts. Lead us in the way everlasting. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Benediction: May we bear witness to the love of God in this world, so that those to whom love is a stranger will find in you generous friends. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

1. <http://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/5596930?&ncid=tweetlnkushpmg00000055> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. http://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/5596930?&ncid=tweetlnkushpmg00000055 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <http://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/5596930?&ncid=tweetlnkushpmg00000055> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <http://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/5596930?&ncid=tweetlnkushpmg00000055> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. http://revsara.blogspot.com/2009/07/sermon-on-princess-bride.html [↑](#footnote-ref-6)