

We Are Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

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Everyone has a favorite psalm. Mine is 139. Since it has come up for today in the common lectionary, I want to draw upon its wisdom as we, as a nation, recall the life of Martin Luther King, Jr.

The psalmist chooses his words carefully. We are **fearfully** and **wonderfully** made. These words convey a sense of the sacred and the miraculous. As the writer ponders the parts of the human body and their interconnectedness, he is simply awed by the handiwork of the Creator. The psalmist sees we are more than the sum of our parts; we have a soul and a personality and a character. We have a sense of humor and a rhythm, and we have esteem and dignity and honor, qualities that don't show up on an X-Ray or a CAT-Scan, but qualities that reflect the genius of our Maker.

The psalmist takes a long look at himself in the mirror and trembles. Goosebumps appear.

I used to ride on the Art Study Group bus to New York City. We'd leave early Wednesday morning. I'd drop off at Times Square. By 5:30 we were to rejoin the bus at Rosie O'Grady's. Back on the bus, there was always a lot of chatter about what show people had seen, what soup people had tasted, what art gallery had been visited. Sometimes, all I had to report is that I had watched a lot of people. Like the psalmist, I have this fascination with people, especially our faces, the lines and the crevasses, the beards and the whiskers, the fatigue and the sorrow, the joy and the happiness. I can sit for hours watching people, knowing each person has a sacred story, knowing each person has hopes and dreams and aspirations, knowing each person has wept and lost and failed.

I'd get back on the Art Study bus understanding Psalm 139 a little bit better. We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

When anyone comes to know this truth and to internalize this truth, it is next to impossible to ever harm another human being. It is next to impossible to ever violate another's rights or another's freedom or another's personal space. If I know in my heart and in my mind that you are fearfully and wonderfully made, I wouldn't dare dishonor you or devalue you or take advantage of you in any way, shape or form. This is why I am an advocate of memorizing passages of Scripture such as this one. When I memorize Psalm 139, the words and the truth of it find their way into my bones, into the marrow of my bones, into the cell structure, into the DNA, into the muscle tissue and into the blood stream. I am fearfully and wonderfully made; **and so are you!**

We remember Dr. King as a champion of non-violence, as a prophet who called for basic respect between Blacks and Whites, between the haves and the have nots, between those who came to America on the Mayflower and those who came on the Amistad, between those who came seeking freedom and those who came being denied their freedom. Dr. King knew all about Psalm 139. He earned a PhD in Systematic Theology. In Systematic Theology, one learns to sort everything out, put two and two together, match up belief with practice, and embrace a vision of God's hope for the world.

Dr. King understood that he was fearfully and wonderfully made. He understood that George Wallace was fearfully and wonderfully made. He understood that Indira Ghandi was fearfully and wonderfully made. He understood that Ella Deloria was fearfully and wonderfully made. He understood that even James Earl Ray was fearfully and wonderfully made.

Dr. King knew that when people of all races and religions and ethnicities embrace this eternal truth, then there would not be war any more; there would not be bullying anymore. There would not be rape anymore. There would be no more violence of any kind because when you know that this child and that youngster and this immigrant and that refugee and this woman and that grandfather and this prisoner and that felon and this teacher and that neighbor are all fearfully and wonderfully made, you just can't bring yourself to violate them in any sense of that word.

Bringing all this closer to home, Randy LaRocca is fearfully and wonderfully made. He is a school bus driver! He loves and safeguards our children. He has non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. He needs a bone marrow transplant. Andy Weatherwax is fearfully and wonderfully made. He is a published poet. His poems bring me to tears, especially the one that names his Parkinson's as a gift. He needs a little understanding from the people ahead of him in the grocery store checkout line. Eunice Meshrow is fearfully and wonderfully made. She is 95. She is anxious about the night time hours. She has an awesome life story and she needs someone to hold her hand, someone to listen to her story, someone to pray with her.

I guess the point is...we are ALL fearfully and wonderfully made. God's thumbprints are all over us. As Rodin's thumbprints were all over his clay sculptures and just as Beethoven's thumbprints were all over his musical scores and just as Julia Child's thumbprints were all over her crepe suzettes; God's thumbprints are all over our bodies and our minds and our souls. Internalizing this truth is the first step in becoming a peace maker in the world. This I share with you today in the greatest of hope. Amen!