**Order of Service Arklow Presbyterian 10.00 a.m.**

**WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**CALL to WORSHIP:**

**PRAISE:** Praise my soul the King of heaven

**OPENING PRAYER and LORD’S PRAYER:**

**GREETING ONE ANOTHER:**

**CHILDREN’S TALK: ‘God made me and He really loves me’**

**KID’S PRAISE:** Our God is a great big God

*(Announce that children leave for Sunday School after this hymn)*

**OT READING:** Psalm 139

**NT READING:** Romans 8 v 28-39

**SERMON:** ‘Our great and loving God’

**PRAISE and OFFERING:** Lord I come before your throne

(*What a faithful God have I*)

**OFFERING PRAYER AND PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:**

**PRAISE:** Oh Lord my God when I in awesome wonder

**BENEDICTION:** The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; be with us all evermore.

**Kid’s Talk – God is Real and He really loves me**

**Intro**

This morning I want to help you to get to know me a bit better. I thought the best way to do that is to show you some of the hobbies I enjoy –

Cricket bat Where did this come from? Someone made it out of willow.

Rugby ball Where did it come from? Someone made it out of leather

Drum Where did it come from? Someone made it out of wood and metal.

Picture Where did it come from? Someone painted it.

Lego Car Where did it come from? I made it out of lego.

All these things are very special to me because they have given me so much fun and enjoyment. But they didn’t just fall out of the sky one day and land in my garage. Each one of these things were carefully thought about and made by people who are very clever.

It’s the same with you and me and with the whole world. When you think about the trees and the birds and the cats and dogs and cows and birds and the sea and the rivers and the fields and mountains. All of these things are amazing. They are good to look at and to play with, to go swimming in or to climb. They give us so much fun and enjoyment. But each one of them were carefully thought about and made. They didn’t just fall out of the sky.

Who do you think made all of the things that we see in the world around us and all the stars and the moon and the planets and galaxies that we can’t see?

You know, whatever age you live to, however many years you spend at school and college and reading books, the most important thing that you can ever learn is that there is a really, really clever person called *‘God’* who made everything and who made you.

How do you think the people who made my drum, my ball and my bat feel about what they made? How do you think I feel about the picture I painted and the lego car I made?

So how do you think God feels about you?

That’s the second most important thing you will ever learn in your whole life- God loves you. Just because He made you. You are really, really, really, really, really special to God.

That’s all I want you to remember today –

God made me and He loves me very much.

Let’s Pray together….

**Prayer**

Dear God, Thank you for everything that you have made in the world. Thank you that you made me and that you love me very much. Help me to love you back. Amen.

**Psalm 139- God is everywhere, knows everything**

**and is in complete control.**

**Intro:**

Often in life it’s really easy to get our focus on the wrong thing- we can focus on our problems, we can focus on the things that we don’t like about ourselves. We can focus on what we would like to achieve, we can focus on the things we don’t like about our church and so the list goes on….It’s so important to continually remind ourselves that the most important thing to focus on is none of these things, rather the most important thing to focus on is God. For when we get a fresh glimpse of who He really is, and what He has done and can still do, most of these other things take on a very different and usually less important perspective in our lives….

One of the best ways of helping us to focus on God is to read one of the Psalms. Today I want us to take a few moments looking at Psalm 139 together.

This is probably the most famous of all David’s poems. In it, he reminds us of 3 very important truths about God. The first is this- God knows everything.

1. **God knows everything:**

You know as the years go by we begin to notice a few changes about ourselves- a bit of extra fat here, a wrinkle there, a few more grey hairs, the odd lapse in memory, a stiffening of the joints. We can usually make such a good job of covering these things up that other people simply don’t notice. It’s almost as if we’re afraid to let others see what we are really like in case they decide they don’t like us anymore! The thing is, no amount of cover up works with God because God knows absolutely everything about us. David says, *“God knows when we sit down and when we get up. He understands what we are thinking. He knows when we go out and when we lie down. He even knows what we are about to say before we open our mouths!”*

But the good news is, no amount of cover up is necessary with God either! Because even though God already knows everything about us, He still accepts us and loves us! I want to encourage you this morning, whatever blemishes you feel you may have. Whatever things you may have done and wished you hadn’t, whatever weaknesses you feel you have that always hold you back, whatever characteristics other people have made you feel bad about, God knows all about it! And He still loves you as if you were the only person that He had ever made. You are still useful to Him and to other people in this world.

The other I thing I want to say is that however difficult you are finding life right now or whatever crises come your way in the year ahead I want to remind you that God already knows about it. He already understands the depth of pain that you are feeling and He cares deeply about it. Let me encourage you not to despair in these times but by faith to look to God- tell Him exactly how it feels, cry out to him for patience and wisdom and strength. You can be certain that He who endured the cross will know how best to comfort you. You can be sure that He who created the universe will have the ability to sustain you.

The second important truth that David reminds us about God in this psalm is that He is everywhere.

1. **God is Everywhere:**

When we’re busy, which is pretty much all of the time for most of us, our minds are caught up in the important details of living and working and enjoying life. All this is good, for all of life is God’s gift to us to be enjoyed. But at the same time, in the midst of it all, it’s easy for us to forget about God. But, although we can forget about Him, the truth is we can never get away from Him. When we wake up in the morning, God is there. When we are driving in the car, he is there. When we reach the office we discover He has already arrived. When we come home God is waiting for us. In fact, there is nowhere we can go where God is not there already. To some extent that can be a little disconcerting. It’s like having the boss’s eye on us 24-7. Then again, that can be a good thing for us.

Knowing that God is always near me hearing what I say, knowing all my words and deeds, all my work and play, can be one of the greatest motivators to helping us to live in ways that are morally upright. It’s always a great safeguard against temptation to know that even when other people can’t see or hear what we are saying or doing that God sees and hears us.

In Psalm 139, David reflects on this truth about God. He says, *“Wherever I go God is there. There’s no where I can escape from his presence.”* But as David contemplates the fact that God is everywhere he doesn’t seem to mind. In fact, it seems to bring Him comfort and encouragement. He says, “*Even if I have to go and live abroad, God’s hand will be there to guide me and keep me secure.”* He also says, *“Even when the darkness closes in around me God will still be able to see clearly because day and night are just the same for Him.”*

I want you to remember that this year. Every day you open your eyes say to yourself, *“God is with me.”* Whatever difficult decisions you have to make remember God is there with you and He will help you to make the right choice. When there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel, remember that God is in the darkness as well as the light- let Him guide you and sustain you. When you are separated from your family for work reasons, remember that God is with them, He will look after them. When you head off to the University Campus every week remember God goes with you or when your children head off to campus remember God is with them! Whatever physical or mental tasks you are finding it increasingly difficult to manage, remember God is there. He will give you strength and the grace to cope. Whatever trials or uncertainties you have to endure, please don’t try and go them alone. Remember God is beside you, so talk to Him, tell him your concerns, allow Him to help and sustain you. I am convinced that the biggest reason that we don’t enjoy our lives more fully is because we forget to invite God to be part of our daily experience even though He is right there with us. More often we’re inclined to leave Him in the corner rather than inviting Him to be part of the conversation. Let me encourage you to remember that God is always with you. Let me encourage you to include Him more in your day to day life in the week ahead.

The third thing David reminds us about God in Psalm 139 is that He is in complete control of all of life’s details.

**3 God is in complete control:**

Having thought about the amazing realities that God knows everything about him and is always around to help him, David moves on to contemplate the mind-blowing idea that even before he was born, God was planning every detail of his entire life. He says, *“God put me together in my mother’s womb. Even before my parents or others could see me, God knew me! But he didn’t just know me, He designed me and mapped out an entire life for me before I was even one day old!”*

David just can’t get over how much God thinks about him. He suggests that God planned every little genetic detail that made him who he was- his eye colour, his height, his talents, his weaknesses, his intelligence, his temperament, his gender and so, so much more besides. Yet he believes that God’s thoughts about him didn’t just stop at the planning or manufacturing stage! David goes on to say that from the moment he was born God has continued to think about him and has planned so many details of his day to day life. In fact, he says, God loves him so much that he thinks about him more than there are grains of sand on the beach!

Isn’t that an amazing and an extremely comforting thought to bring into the weeks ahead? God loves us so much that he planned every little thing about us. What’s more, he continues to be concerned about us and has plans for us every day of our lives here on earth. I don’t know how that makes you feel. It certainly doesn’t mean that we are simply divine robots with no freedom to make our own choices. It doesn’t mean that our lives are pre-programmed to follow some predetermined celestial program.

Rather it should give us great assurance and confidence that God loves us more than we can ever imagine. He understands us more than we understand ourselves. And He has a plan and purpose for our lives whatever comes our way. Plans that our good. Plans to help us to enjoy being human despite all its limitations. Plans to enable us to deepen our relationships with Him and with other people. Plans to help us learn new things and encounter new experiences. Plans to help us change for the better so that bit by bit we may become more like His Son Jesus. And ultimately plans to bring us through death into a new and everlasting existence in heaven when we will experience humanity in all its fullness and joy.

Every time you look in the mirror this week remember this- God made you! He thought of every little detail that makes you who you are- unique and special! What’s more, He continues to think about you in the same way every day! He has a plan and purpose for you every day that is good and loving even on days when it is tough. He is interested in every little detail of your life no matter how trivial it may seem to you. Let me encourage you to allow these thoughts to renew your confidence in your own self-worth and to reassure you of just how much God loves you. Let me also encourage you to allow these thoughts about God to increase your love for Him and to enable you to trust Him more in the year that lies ahead.

**Conclusion:**

As we near the latest Brexit deadline there are many things we can’t be certain about but we can be certain about God. That’s why the most important thing for us to do is to refocus on who God is.

In Psalm 139 David reminds us of 3 important truths about God-

1. **God knows all things.**

Whatever comes your way remember God knows, He understands, and He loves and cares about you.

1. **God is everywhere.**

Whatever happens remember that God is with you. He will guide you and sustain you.

1. **God is in control.**

Whatever you encounter remember that the God who created you is still intimately involved in every detail of your life. He has a plan and purpose for you that is always loving and good.

# Call to Worship (Psalm 103)

Praise the Lord O my soul, all my inmost being praise His Holy name. Praise the Lord O my soul and forget not all his benefits-

Who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles…. Let us stand and sing *‘Praise my soul the King of heaven’*

**Opening Prayer**

Almighty God, great and wonderful, all-powerful, all-loving, all-good, all forgiving, once more we take time to worship you together because you deserve it.

We come to remind ourselves of all that you have done, creating the universe, your mighty acts throughout the years, your coming to our world in Jesus, your transforming of billions of lives through Him.

We come to rejoice in all that you are still doing through the power of your Holy Spirit, your faithful love reaching out to all people everywhere, your mercy offering new beginnings where before there was only despair, your saving purposes constantly being fulfilled.

Mighty God, forgive us for losing the sense of awe and belief in you that we once had. Forgive us for forgetting how great you are. Forgive us for doubting your love. Forgive us for bringing you down to our level rather than lifting our hearts to yours. Forgive us for the smallness of our vision, the feebleness of our worship and the weakness of our faith.

Lord thank you that you are kind and merciful. Thank you that you love us no matter what. Thank you for all the ways you show us your love, not least in sending Jesus to die for our sins. Thank you for the freedom we have to come to worship you together. Thank you for our homes, our jobs our families and friends. Thank you for food and fresh water each day and for all the hobbies and activities you allow us to enjoy. Thank you for all the ways you have answered our prayers in recent days. Thank you for every way you have guided us when the way has seemed uncertain and for all the times you have brought us comfort and strength when life has been difficult.

Father God, enlarge our vision again today. Deepen our faith, renew our trust, restore our sense of wonder before you. Teach us that you are a great God above all, Lord of the nations, sovereign over time and space. And also the God who is everywhere, who knows us intimately and who has a purpose and a plan that is for our good.

So may the word of our mouths and the thoughts of our hearts be pleasing in your sight, our rock and our redeemer, Amen.

**The Lord’s Prayer:**

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name,

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day, our daily bread, And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us,

And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil,

For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,

For ever and ever, AMEN.

**Offering**

Thank you Lord Jesus that though you were rich, yet for us you became poor that we through your poverty might become rich. By your grace let our riches supply the needs of others so that we may not have too much and they may not have too little. Amen.

**Prayers for Others**

Living God, we pray for all those who feel that they have lost control of their lives –

Overwhelmed by the pressures of work, burdened by financial responsibilities, overcome by personal tragedy or relationships that have broken down, battling against the rigours of old age or wrestling with chronic illness; in pain of body and turmoil of mind.

Lord remind them gently that you are present with them.

We pray for the victims of other people’s lack of control – wounded in body or mind, abused children, broken homes, victims of burglary, assault, domestic violence, and political conflicts.

Lord remind each one that you love them very much.

We pray for those who struggle to control aspects of their character – lust, temper, greed, impatience, envy, intolerance. Lord remind them that you are a God who can give them the power to change.

Living God, give to all who are near the end of their tether the assurance that you are ultimately in control, to those who are hurt the comfort of your healing love, to those troubled in mind the inner peace which you alone can give, and to those discouraged by their repeated failings the gift of self- control.

Lord we bring to you those who are sick, who have been bereaved recently and those we know who are struggling with life at the moment….

Lord we also bring to you our Taoiseach and political leaders and ask that you will give them great wisdom in all the decisions that they have to make each week….

Finally we pray for ourselves and our families…

Lord whatever problems we are currently facing, help us to look up and to remember that you are a God who loves us, who is with us, who understands everything we are going through and who ultimately has plans and purposes for us that are good. Lord give us the faith to trust you and the grace to carry us through. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**Sending and Benediction**

Our worship has not ended, it has only just begun, for God is with us every moment of every day. Go then and offer the worship He desires- to act justly, to love kindness and to walk humbly with Him every step along the way…Let us encourage each other in our walk of faith this week as we share the words of the grace together…

*“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore, Amen.”*