



Welcome

to our Sunday Service - 3rd May
Prepared by Mervyn Bedford

Happy Birthday **Anne & Pauline**
for the 8th May.

Birthday greetings today,
May God bless you we pray.
Live for Jesus dear
Anne & Pauline,
May he guide you each day xx

Dear Lord,

We praise you for the wonder and beauty of your creation. We thank you that you are gracious and compassionate and good to all you have made.

Thank you Jesus that you are the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep and searches for the sheep that are lost.

We pray that many people would be found by you during this difficult time, and that you would fill us with your love for the lost and lonely. Please help those who are poorly at time. Thank you for all the key workers; please help them, keep them safe, and may they know you are their shepherd and watching over them. Amen

The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never.
I nothing lack if I am his,
and he is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow,
my ransomed soul he leadeth;
and where the verdant pastures grow,
with food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish, oft I strayed,
but yet in love he sought me;
and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill,
with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me.

And so through all the length of days,
thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house forever.



Psalm 139

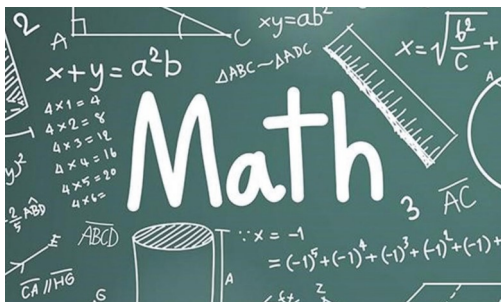
Divided into 4 lessons!



Chess Lesson



Music Lesson



Maths Lesson



Self-defence Lesson

Followed by a short test!

Psalm 139

¹ You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.

² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴ Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely.

⁵ You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,"

¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, God, How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand - when I awake, I am still with you.

¹⁹ If only you, God, would slay the wicked! Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty!

²⁰ They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name.

²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, LORD, and abhor those who are in rebellion against you?

²² I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.

²³ Search me, God, and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts.

²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Chess Lesson



One of the things the lock-down period will be remembered for in our house are the many chess games that took place, between family members and friends online.

Read the words in blue from Psalm 139 and imagine trying to play chess with God!!

It would be hopeless, He would know every move before we made it!

It's a great feeling when you win a game of chess, say check-mate, and your opponent has nowhere left to go.

We are check-mate when it comes to God's presence and love! There is nowhere we can go to get away from him!

Verse 1 says 'You know me'

What a wonderful promise! There are a couple of famous people I would really like to meet; however if I ever met them, I would know loads about them and they would know nothing about me. It would take a lot of time with that person to correct that imbalance.

But when we come to God he knows us completely, better than we know ourselves and he wants to be in relationship with us!!

We are also check-mate when it comes to all the ways we have broken God's holy law. There is nothing we can do to atone for this and so I love the part in verse 11 where it talks about the darkness. God knows and loves me in the dark, shame-filled places of my life and gradually loves them into the light.

The game changing moment comes when we receive the victory of Jesus and he takes our check-mate and cancels our wrong moves and bad choices by destroying their power to defeat me and take me out of the game.

However I may have messed up the moves, he offers me his 'win' and I live in the wonder of it!

Music Lesson



Here in the red words of our reading we see God as our creator. Creator is similar to composer; I like to think of God as the great composer of the universe, and us as part of his majestic symphony.

In verse 16 it says, '**all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be**'. What an incredible concept!



First we need to acknowledge that each note is valued, known and carefully placed for the purpose and pleasure of the composer. Notes are not just statistics.

Now let's imagine that this bar of music lasted for 100 years. It would be very slow!!!

The semibreve by the red spot would last for 100 years, the dotted minim by the yellow dot 75 years, the crotchet by the blue dot 25 years, the quavers by the green dots 12:5 years and the little grace note by the pink spot about 5 years.

Which note is closest to your age? Some of our Spice Girls are nearly semibreves!! That is a sentence that I think we can safely say has never been written before!! :-)

- ◆ **Long notes** - continuity and depth
- ◆ **Middle notes**- harmony and colour
- ◆ **Shorter notes**-movement and melody
- ◆ **Little grace notes**- beauty and joy to all the others!

Life span is not fair! Whilst running with Matt a while back we were discussing the concept of everyone living to exactly the same age. Firstly we tried to decide what age that should be and then we tried to imagine what it would be like to live in a world like that? It was a good conversation.

Would you want to live in a world like that?

Just before I left Devon, a little boy who attended one of my music classes died of a cot death just after his first birthday. His family and the community around him were gutted and numb, but his death opened up deep wells of compassion and love. He will always be a grace note in the song of my life that opened up unexpected beauty, deep friendship and revealed loveliness in the whole community.

We are all loved by God, The Composer!

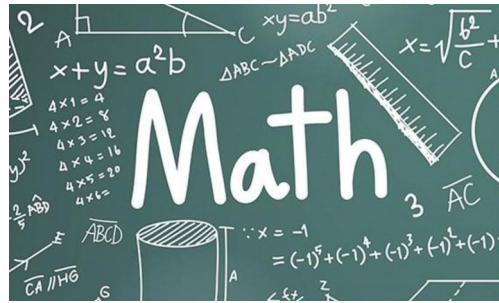
None of us know how long our note will last, but we can all know we are loved by the composer and he sees the whole symphony! I'm nearly a minim; however, I think what's important is not so much how long my note lasts, but am I in-tune with Jesus and living in harmony with the other notes in my bar?

I like this picture too because ***no person is too old to play a part.*** In God's music while your note is in the bar you have a part to play! The worship and prayers of older people make a huge difference.

**The Holy spirit works in our lives
to bring us in tune with Jesus.
This can be an excruciating
process at times!**



Maths Lesson



Time for some counting, but can you do it?

Verse 18 tells us that **'God's thoughts towards us outnumber the grains of sand'**.

God's thoughtfulness cannot be measured or counted.

Nothing about God can be measured...

His grace, His forgiveness, His love, His Patience, His Mercy, His Friendship, His Goodness.

Never worship anything that can be measured!

We are surrounded by different statistics that give us various information,

◆ School league tables ◆ Election results, ◆ Popular baby names

Statistics about everything, even how many spiders you eat in your sleep each year!!

At the moment we are having to process some very upsetting statistics. Each day during the news we are told the number of people who have died of the corona virus in the past 24 hours. Thankfully these numbers have started to decline.

These numbers got me thinking about other things in history with shocking statistics.

The number of people who died of the Spanish flu that started in January 1918 is estimated to be around 50 million. Thankfully, the advances in medical knowledge, equipment and the dedication of medical staff are saving many lives during this current pandemic.

Around 80 million people died before their time during WW2 and the Holocaust which lasted for around 6 years. 6 years equals 2190 days; if we divide 80 million by 2190 that gives an average death toll of 36,529 people per day, everyday for 6 years. That's more than the entire population of this country!

But none of these people are statistics to God. Each of them are still known to him. Living notes in his symphony. Jesus modelled that God knows each individual through ...

... the story of the lost sheep - searching for the individual.

... the woman at the well - going out of his way to meet the individual

... Zacchaeus up a tree - knowing each person by name, not a number.

Self-defence Lesson



The Psalm seems to suddenly change gear here,

I used to wish that verses 19-22 weren't part of the Psalm!

But I see the importance of this small section now. We are in a spiritual battle and the enemy is always trying to sow lies and doubts that steal our confidence and joy and suck us into a downward spiral of self-destruction

Verse 20 says '***They speak of you [God] with evil intent, your adversaries misuse your name***'.

This Psalm is full of life giving truth and comfort that the enemy doesn't want us to believe, let alone apply.

This section again underlines our value to God. We protect things that are valuable to us and keep them safe. The Crown Jewels are heavily defended in London and God wants us to have a secure defence around us, as we are very valuable to him.

Bad company corrupts good character and we need to have healthy boundaries around our hearts and pursue wholesome relationships.

Jesus ultimately defeated the power of the enemy through his death and resurrection and when we submit ourselves to him the enemy has to flee.



Test Time!

The last 2 verses of the Psalm are an invitation to God to run some tests in your life.

A bit like an Ofsted inspection!

These verses are lovely, they invite us into relationship with God and assure us that he wants to work in our lives. We are a work in progress and the last word of the Psalm reveals the timeline of God's project. EVERLASTING !!

You are an eternal work of art in the making!

Test Time continued...

At this time when we are all faced with the possibility of death...

These questions are not meant to be morbid but to create a place of hope.
If we are peaceful about the end of our lives we can fully enjoy the present!
Hypothetically, If you knew you only had 5 days left to live...

Who would you want to know, that you love them?

Who would you need to forgive? Or ask forgiveness from?

Would you need to repent for something, or put something right?

Would you have peace, knowing your life was covered by the perfection of Jesus?

Would there be a part of you excited at the prospect of meeting Jesus?



Do any of these questions prompt you to do something or contact someone?

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

When I am afraid I put my trust in you. Psalm 90:12 & 56:3

As a human being you are a living note in the song of creation, which is wonderful, but when you give your life to Jesus you become a living note in the eternal love song of God which is absolutely glorious!