

- 7. Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?**
- 8. If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.**
- 9. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,**
- 10. even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.**
- 11. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,"**
- 12. even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.** Psalm 139:7-12

The other day someone said to me, “The reason we have so many school shootings is that God isn’t allowed in school anymore.” While I know that’s a popular view of school shootings, it isn’t very good theology. It isn’t good theology because it misrepresents God in several ways.

First, it makes God a petty entity whose feelings are hurt because God isn’t allowed to be somewhere. Since God can’t be there, God’s response is to allow innocent children to be gunned down. I imagine God says something like this, “If I can’t be in schools, then I’ll send a killer to teach you a lesson.” Sorry, but I don’t think that represents God very well. Such theology turns God into a monster.

If a human being were to act like this, we would quickly deem them unbalanced. In fact, this is exactly how shooters act. They feel slighted or bullied at school, so they respond with violence. We recognized such action in a human being as wrong; it is also wrong in God.

Second, as the psalmist says Psalm 139, God is everywhere. Even when we try to flee from God, or we try to exclude God, God is still there. God knows no bounds, and we can’t make boundaries where God can’t go. We can’t exclude God. Everywhere we go, God is already there.

Aaron Niequist in his book, *The Eternal Current*, writes that it is important for us to reorient ourselves to God being everywhere. We have so compartmentalized God that we think God can only be where we want God to be. It shows up in our prayers when we begin, “O Lord, we just ask you to be present here...” The idea is that God can only come where we want God to come. If we don’t want God, God can’t be there.

Niequist suggests that we need to recover the psalmist’s understanding of God. God is already here. God is wherever we are. Instead of inviting God to join us, we are to join God in whatever God is doing here. Wherever we go, we are to orient ourselves to God being there and we ask what God is doing there. We seek to find out what God is doing so that we can join God in God’s work.

If you are a teacher, God is already doing something at school, join in. If you are a plumber, then God is already present and doing something in the home you are at, join in. If you meet someone at the grocery store, God is already there doing something, join in. Imagine how our world would change if all of us were actively looking for what God is doing so that we might join in.

Pastor Parnell