

Shall we open our Bibles this morning to Psalm 40, verse 5.

The books of the Old Testament are divided into three major headings. There is the historical section at the beginning. It begins with the book of Genesis. It runs through the book of Esther. And then there is the prophetic portion of the Old Testament that begins with the book of Isaiah towards the end of the Old Testament. Runs all the way to the end to Malachi. In the middle are what are called the books of wisdom or poetry. They start in the book of Job. They run to the Song of Solomon. But they are primarily interested in your personal and intimate relationship with God. They speak to that. They approach you or communicate with you from the perspective of God's love, your need, His joy, your fear, His deliverance and all. And it is really to drive you to a daily walk with God.

If you were to paint the Old Testament with a broad brush, you might say that the historical books are primarily interested in the past; that the prophetic books, as you might suspect, would literally be looking forward to the future; but the ones in the middle, of which these are a part, are interested in the present tense walk with God. They want you to learn what God's heart for you is and what your heart towards Him should be. So this morning I want to look at two verses, verse 5, verse 17, because I think in a few minutes we can learn one of the vital truths of our relationship with God that can revolutionize the way that you see yourself before the Lord, but also that you can see the Lord more clearly.

I was on the plane flying back from Nashville this week and talked to a guy that -- I've never heard a guy that has to be more busy than this man in his life. And it got me to thinking about how busy we live. You know, the Western culture is not one to relax. There's no siestas in people's lives here, for the most part. We're busy. And because of our busyness, I think that we tend to forget things. I know that I do. You know, you forget to put out the dog and you leave the house. I was making oatmeal the other day and took it off the stove and left the burner going. Two hours later I go, hey, what's the deal? Oh, I can't blame anyone but me. You know, you forget to pick something up at the store. I don't know how many times we've gone shopping and go, you know what we forgot? There's always something you forget, isn't there? You leave your clothes at the cleaners. We've forgotten dinner dates with friends -- former friends. You forget somebody's birthday. God forbid you should forget an anniversary. You probably haven't done that, because you're still here breathing. You forget an appointment. My mom one time picking me up from school forgot, and she left us there till

5:30. You know, we got out of school at 3:00. At least she said she forgot. I'm going to believe her. I don't know.

I am convinced that the older you get, the harder it is to remember things. The "I can't remember" and the "I forgot" folder in my life continues to grow. I have to be really careful to note where I lay down my keys, because I could be hours looking for them otherwise. Now, I have a theory, and it's not Biblical, but I'll give it to you anyway. My theory is that as you get older, you just don't care as much. So it isn't that I'm forgetting stuff, I just don't care. What about this? I don't care. And we'll see if that proves out. I'm still working on it, how it functions. And sometimes that's very helpful. Like you take me to lunch and I don't remember that it's my turn to take you to lunch, and I don't care, because I forgot. Other times, not so good, when you need to remember. No matter how old you are or what your experience has been, we tend to, because of our busyness, forget things. We get preoccupied and we drop the ball, which I think if we know that to be so, make David's words here about God and His thoughts towards us all the more amazing. Amazing.

We've entitled this message this morning after Willie Nelson, and his song "You are always on my mind." We were in Nashville this week and we went to the Johnny Cash museum. I love Johnny Cash. I loved his testimony after he'd gotten saved. And I had a good friend that -- actually I didn't -- I knew he played with him, but I watched some of the video clips, and in the background was Dennis Agajanian playing for Johnny Cash. He played with him for years. So I texted Dennis -- I have his phone number -- and I said, "Hey, dude, I'm watching you here in the hall of fame. Man, you're old." And he wrote back and he said, "I'm with Charlie Daniels on tour in Alaska going from one Inuit village to the next preaching the gospel. So far we've had 155 people get saved the last 16 days." And they're taking these little bush planes. And so I thought to myself, there is salvation in country music, which is why I picked this title. That's all I was -- told all that to you to tell you that.

Verse 5 -- maybe I've gone crazy. Verse 5, "Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done; and Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order. If I was to declare and speak of them, more than they could be numbered." I want you to notice the comparison here between a couple of things; number one, how busy God is, His great and marvelous works, and the fact that in all of that busyness, He thinks about you constantly.

It is very difficult for me to comprehend the idea of God thinking about me all the time. I want to read the Bible and believe in it, so, you got to wrestle with stuff sometimes. And I trust that people

who love me think about me now and then. You know, I come to mind and they smile. It's a good thought. It's a joyful thought. I suspect that people who don't like me think about me a little bit more often, but not with the same kind of joy. So I believe, and I understand from the Bible, that God loves me unconditionally. And I can even agree with you that there are times when God should think about me, like when I'm praying or maybe I did something faithfully and the Lord takes note. I suspect more often than not God thinks about me when I fall on my face and disappoint Him. But God thinking about me all the time is amazing. I can see Him shaking His head. "There he goes again," muttering something under His breath. There are times in my life I wish God wasn't thinking about me at all, but I'm not going to be able to get away with that.

These two verses, just these two, and there are several others, would paint for you an entirely different concept of God, one that says without apology there isn't a split second in your life where God stops thinking about you, or you're out of His mind, or you're away from His vision, or you're removed from His concern, or He stops having willful thoughts about your life; not one moment, not ever. But that is said in contrast to verse 5, the first part, God, you've done such marvelous things. In other words, He's busy, but He's got time for you.

It seems to me that if there's somebody whose plate is full, it must be the Lord's. I mean, just factor in universe maintenance. That's enough to drive you crazy; right? The heavens and the earth and everything that's in them. The Psalmist writes in Psalm 95, "The Lord is a great God, and great King above all gods. In His hands are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills, those belong to Him. The sea is His, He made it. His hands have formed the dry land. Oh come and see and worship, bow down and kneel before the Lord our God, our maker." Nehemiah wrote in chapter 9 of his book, "You alone are the Lord; You've made the heavens, You've made the heavens of the heavens, You've made all of the host of heaven. Everything in the earth You've made, the sea and everything that's in them, and You preserve them all. And that's why the host of heaven worship You." God is busy.

Paul when he spoke to the doubters on Mars Hill about -- and he found an altar there that was dedicated to an unknown god, in case they left anybody out, Paul began by saying, "I know this God, and He can't be worshipped with man's hands. He doesn't need anything. In fact, He gives life and breath to all things. In Him we move and live and have our being." That's a pretty busy job.

I think it was Job who said in chapter 12, verse 10 of Job, "In whose

hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?" You go back to verse 5, "Oh Lord, how wonderful are Your works and the things that You've done."

What if God for one minute forgot that I'm going to need to breathe again, and in His hands are my breath? And He just, "Oh, I'm sorry. I was distracted. Where are my keys?" And people just start falling dead all over. Daily care for His creation. How difficult is that? Multiply that for yourself times every person on the planet and every animal that roams the earth, and every fish in the sea and every bird that flies through the air, and you go on and on. I mean, even the universe is so vast that, when David wrote in Psalm 8 and he said, "When I consider the heavens, and the work of Your hands, the sun and the stars, which You've ordained," he said, "What is man that You would be mindful of him, or even the son of man, that You would visit him?" David just saw himself so insignificant in comparison to what God was doing. It blew his mind. He just felt like he shrunk in significance. Overwhelmed, the stars, the planet, every orbit, nobody's crashing, no accident, no unfortunate kind of development. God watches over them all.

When Job began to be told by the Lord beginning in chapter 38 that he wasn't God, maybe can -- to compare to Job's complaining with God's goodness and God's ability, He began with the heavens. He said in Job 38, "Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, can you loose the belt of Orion? Can you send Mazzaroth out in its season?" Just huge stars. Went on to talk about, "Can you hunt prey for the lion?" But our God can do that. Can you satisfy his appetites? God's busy.

I recently read an article, it was earlier last year, that the earth had barely missed a collision with an asteroid that was a half mile wide. They said it was traveling at 50,000 miles an hour, that it would have put a hole in the ground 10 miles wide, 10 miles deep, and that it missed us by 500,000 miles, roughly 10 hours. Well, that's not good news. What was worse is they told us the day after it happened. Thanks for the warning. And I thought about, are there no contingency plans? Who's watching out for us? So I went and looked because it made me ask, don't we have things for this? NASA has a satellite called a NEOWISE. I had to write it down and tell you what it stands for: Near Earth Object Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer. Well, whatever that cost, it was too much, because it didn't even catch the thing until the day after. I'm much more comforted thinking God watches over me than NASA.

With all that God is doing, He thinks about you always. And to me that's really too hard to wrap my arms around. I want to fully understand that, but I can't begin to grasp what that means. And

so there's the comparison in verse 5, the wonderful works and then the thoughts without number, cannot be catalogued, innumerable. Running the universe, providing breath for every man, feeding every plant, taking care of every bird. And the Lord is just involved.

We were sitting out on our patio a while back and there was a bunch of flies, and I don't know why they were around or out that day, but I wondered out loud and said to the Lord, why did You make these things? They're just good for nothing. I feel about them like I feel about cats. I'm pretty sure, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm pretty sure the cats were created after the fall. I don't think they were in God's original design. I think they showed up when man began to sin, oh, they're going to need a cat now. Again, just my theory. Send your letters to Pastor Doug. But I looked at these flies and I was watching and there are -- you know, flies fly straight, but at some point, when they get close to the ceiling, they flip over and land. I've never seen them do it, but they've got to, right, in their heads go, okay, I got to flip over now and land. I used to go fishing once in a while, but I got sick on the boat a lot. But I remember thinking, how do seagulls know 10 miles off shore that the boat is about to dump its bait? They come from nowhere, over 100 of them, eating bait. And I think the Lord tells them. That's the only thing I can figure out up to this point.

A while ago in the National Geographic magazine I read an article that they had found a new fish that was a species that they hadn't catalogued yet, and the reason is, it doesn't exist in the ocean except -- or until you get three miles deep. And I thought, who in the world is going to see these? My watch -- I have a diving watch that can go to 30,000 feet, because we used to do a lot of diving. And I thought, if I get to 30,000 feet, it might be ticking, but I won't be. I'll be dead. And yet now with the submarines and all, they found these exotic-looking luminescent fish, and I thought, God made those too, because He just never runs out of ideas, I guess. But when I got to Psalm 121, verse 4, it says God never slumbers, He never sleeps, and I was like, He doesn't have time for that. He's got a universe to run.

But in all of that, verse 5, He can't stop thinking about me. And you can add in verse 17 these words, "I am poor and I am needy; and yet the Lord thinks upon me." You should know that God has you on His mind this morning, and verse 17 would say there's rarely little for you to bargain with, or to get Him to become attracted to you. You're at best poor and needy in comparison to Him. Any thought towards you is driven by Him, not by you. And yet He thinks about you all the time.

For those of you who love the Lord and follow Him by faith, His thoughts towards you are to bless, to guide, to direct, to reward for faithfulness, to just show you who He is. That's His desire. That's the best-case scenario. If you're not a believer this morning, God's only concern is that you come to know Him, that He can lull you back, that He can tell you where your sins can be forgiven, that He can point out His son so that you can have eternal life, because He didn't create you for judgment, He created you for life.

In terms of creation, we're pretty insignificant in size. We're little specks of dust; right, on the face of a planet that now has -- I think next month maybe 7.5 billion of those little specks of dust. One planet rotating around the sun, one star in the millions in the Milky Way, one galaxy in the midst of so many others. Isaiah wrote in chapter 40 this about the Lord: "Have you not known? And have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundation of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, it's inhabitants to Him are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a curtain, He spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He brings the princes to nothing; and the judges to the earth useless. Scarcely they are planted, scarcely they are sown, scarcely they take stock and root before He blows upon, and they are withered, and the whirlwind will take them away as stubble. 'Who is like Me? Who can be My equal?' saith the Holy One. Lift up on your eyes on high, see who has created all of these things, who keeps their host by number; who calls them by their name, the greatness of His might and the strength of His power ensures that not one of them goes missing."

God is busy, but you are His concern. As the stars whiz by and the planets spin around and the asteroids race towards certain death, as the flies flip around and the fish swim in the deep, God thinks about you. And not just in a blue moon. He thinks about you all the time. You're His special interest. That's what preoccupies His thoughts.

I think it is Matthew chapter 10 where the Lord said to the disciples, "Aren't two sparrows sold for just a copper coin? And not one of them can fall to the ground except it is your Father's will. Look, the very hairs on your head are numbered." Mine's a low number. "And never should you fear; you are far more valuable to Me than the sparrows." And yet the sparrows have the promise that God continues to pay attention, to know.

He calls you and I the apple of His eye. So how long does the Lord think of you? How often does He think about you? According to verse

5, it tells us that if we were to try to recount those numbers in order, if we were to try to declare a speck of them, that the number was more than we could come up with.

In Psalm 139 we read these words: "How precious are your thoughts towards me, O, God! Great is the sum of them. If I could count them, they would exceed the number of sand upon the sea." 15 or 20 years ago, maybe it's been a little longer now, someone at Stanford, or it was a university up north, decided that they would try to roughly estimate how many grains of sand were along the beach shores in the world. How they came up with it, no idea. But they decided that there were roughly 10 to the 25th power grains of sand. 10 followed by 25 zeros. Big number. They said that's about the number of stars in the universe as far as they could tell. Well, let's make a big number usable. If you lived to be 70 years old, the average life of someone by the time you get to the New Testament, you would have lived roughly 10 to the 9th power of seconds. So just kind of rounding things off, what that tells us is that the Lord's thoughts towards you are roughly three times a second all of your life. Six seconds, nine, 12, 15 thoughts, 18, 21, it doesn't stop, 24. I don't know what He's thinking about you, I just know He's not stopping; right? Obviously I can conclude, if nothing else, confidently that there is no time in my life where God doesn't have me on His mind. And not just as a line item, but multiple times every second His thoughts come towards me. No matter how busy He is, no matter how glorious His work, no matter how great His responsibility, you and I are His interest. How often does He think about me? Well, just start with three times a second. I'm pretty sure it's more, but there you go. That should cover most of our questions.

The second question is, why does He think about me so often? Like I said, it's not just a maintenance checklist. Breathing, check. Everything that the Bible talks about God's thoughts towards us are driven by His love. When you love someone, you think about them often. Sometimes my wife gets invited to go speak at women's things that take her away overnight, and I always try to talk her out of it, because I hate when she leaves. She'll go, "Well, I think the Lord wants me to go." "Oh, I don't think He does." And then when she's gone I got to eat pizza until she comes back. That's all I know how to make. I only know that because I got the phone number in the phone, and they deliver. We don't have guys' and girls' night out at our house, because if we have time to do that, we have time to be together, we'd rather do that. I tell my friends, I love you, but not that much. I'd rather hang around with her, and it's worked out just fine. Love has a way of just causing you to seek out others to fill your thoughts.

God loves you. Now, Satan would like to convince you that that's not so and destroy the truth. He wants to convince you God only thinks about you when He's angry; when you're going to get it. Or maybe he's convinced you He doesn't think about you at all. Do you remember that scripture that the prophet Jeremiah said to the nation when he said, "I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord. They are thoughts of peace, not of evil. I want to give you a future and a hope." That was His promise. What you might not remember is that the Lord sent that promise through the prophet to a nation that was completely rebellious against God. They were on self-destruct. They were running away. They would have to go into captivity to learn to stay and to walk with God, but that wasn't God's desire. His desire is farther down the road. He wants fellowship with you. God's thoughts towards you this morning are good; to give you an expected end, to bring you to peace. His wishes are at the top of the list for you, because He loves you.

That's how much God thinks about you. That's what He's thinking about you right now. And now, and now, and now. I can't get it. I don't get it. I'm telling you something I have no understanding of. But I like to think about it. What should it do for you to know that God always thinking about you? Well, I would say you should be greatly comforted by it. You know, life can be hard. And whether you smile in your pew or not, there's a lot of lonely days when you're walking with God and you're not sure that He's answering your prayers and He's not coming through like you hoped that He would. And you struggle with the fear or the distress or even the danger of that kind of life, and yet God would say to you, I know what you're going through. I know what you're feeling. You're always on my mind. You're not being left alone." That should be great comfort. When the Lord sent Moses to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt after those 430 years, He began by saying to Moses, "I have heard the cries of My people, and I'm coming to help them. I'm going to send you." The Lord's response was to His people, to their needs. They didn't think He'd remembered them. He wanted to say, "I haven't forgotten you. I'm there."

I think knowing that God thinks about you constantly ought to give you great courage. I mean, sometimes the enemy can be pretty intimidating. You know, he can make things that look like the deck is stacked against you, like, man, we're never going to make this. But the Lord knows. And I find it good to realize that even in my predicament, that He's actively involved in taking care of me, and so I can be braver and face challenges with more hopefulness, less hesitation, because God's there. And I want to be sure He's pleased. If nothing else, if you know that God thinks about you constantly, it ought to cause you to love Him greatly. And maybe to think about

Him more often than an hour at church, because by the time you get back next Sunday, man, He's spent a whole week thinking about you, every step along the way.

Psalm 48, I think, it's a little bit ahead of us here, says, "We have thought on you, God, and of your lovingkindness, in the midst of the temple." But what did Isaiah write? "He will keep His mind in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." You're always on His mind. Is He always on your mind? When Paul wrote and said, "You think on these things," and he made a whole list of them, things that are pure and holy and of good report and edifying and helpful, fill your mind with those things.

God is thinking about you this morning. He doesn't forget. He doesn't hesitate. There's no break in the action. He doesn't stop. Now you got to think about Him. And the more that you do, the greater your life of walking with Him will become. Simple truth, but man, life changing. Even if you have a hard time wrapping your arms around it, you should try.