

Who Am I When I Can No Longer Say Who I Am? Finding Ourselves in Psalm 139

There's a question that quietly haunts our age: *Who am I when I can no longer articulate who I am? Am I still here? Do I still matter?*

Our culture tells us personhood rests on what we can do, remember, and achieve. But life has a way of challenging that illusion — through grief, illness, or a dark night of the soul that leaves us feeling lost within ourselves. The fear beneath it all isn't just the fear of loss. It's the fear that *we* might be disappearing too.

God Knows Us Before We Know Ourselves

Psalm 139 answers that fear with astonishing tenderness:

"O Lord, you have searched me and known me."

Notice how the psalmist begins — not with what they know about God, but with what God knows about *them*. This "knowing" is covenant love, not a list of facts in a file. Long before a word forms on our tongue, God knows it completely. And even when words no longer come, God's memory holds us in perfect remembrance.

God's knowledge of us does not depend on our knowledge of ourselves.

Loved Before We Could Earn It

"You knit me together in my mother's womb."

Our identity is rooted before birth, before accomplishment, before any capacity we might later gain or lose. We are not precious because we are useful. We are not loved because we perform. We are loved because God chose to create us.

As Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am." Our Christian confession is simpler: *I am because I am created. I am because I am loved*. That is what makes us a person — and it cannot be earned, diminished, or lost.

Dependence Is Not Failure

When our lives move from strength toward dependence, that does not make us less human. It reveals what we spend much of life trying to forget: **we belong to one another, because we first belong to God**. When someone struggles to carry their own story, we carry it with them — holding their dignity until they can receive it again. Our worth was settled long before we were born. No illness, suffering, or fading capacity can erase it.

Even the Darkness Is Not Dark to God

"If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me...' even the darkness is not dark to you."

The psalm makes no promise that darkness will make sense. It promises presence. Whatever darkness we carry, God is already there.

"I Feel Love. Did I Get It Right?"

In Lisa Genova's novel *Still Alice*, a woman with Alzheimer's can no longer recall the plot of a play her daughter just read to her. But she is still herself, and she says simply, "I feel love. It's about love. Did I get it right?" Her daughter answers, "Yes. You got it exactly right."

That is how God loves us — not "I suppose I'll put up with you," but "It is good that you are here." That is how the Church is called to love every human being, restoring dignity where fear tries to diminish it.

Nothing Can Separate Us

Paul reminds us that neither death nor life, nor anything in all creation, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Not loss. Not weakness. Not darkness. Not confusion. Not even the parts of ourselves we fear are slipping away.

You were known before you were formed. You are known now. You will be known forever. Our lives may hold stories of great loss — but the fullness of our personhood, and the faithfulness of God's love, are never among them.

Amen.