
Church of the Beatitudes United Church of Christ

Known and Loved

A Sermon by

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Scripture: Psalm 139:1–6, 13–18

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🎵 God is still speaking,

In the movie, "*The Bucket List*," we meet two main characters, Carter, an African American car mechanic, centering his life on the needs of his family, and putting others first discovers that he has not accomplished many of his personal dreams and desires. While Edward, a powerful hospital executive, denied himself little, made things happen, lived a self-directed life, discovering in his final days feelings of being lost and alone. Edward has defined life, as much as one can, on his own terms.

In their last days, they meet making an unlikely couple. They meet in an Intensive Care Unit in Edward's hospital and instantly dislike each other. Confined in this difficult setting for days, they grow to know each other and wrestle through their shortcomings. They begin to see and know the strengths and weaknesses of one another; respect and trust blooms between them. Edward barges his way into Carter's personal secrets contained in the high school list of things he wants to do before kicking the bucket, the Bucket List.

As trust grows and knowledge of the other becomes more complete, they each seek to bring resolution to their friend's life. But when Carter takes Edward on a mystery ride to secretly set up a meeting between Edward and his estranged daughter, stuff happens. Edward, looking out the window of the car, recognizes his daughter as she walks past the living room window. Edward is filled with rage, jumps out of the car, and walks away, ranting about how he feels Carter has been meddling in Edward's life where Carter should not.

Ever been there? Either messing with or be messed with?

It is obvious to many, if not all, that there is stuff in human life that should be dealt with and some that should not. Lives that could be so much better if they would only embrace their humanity and accept their limitations. Yet, conversely thinking: don't mess with me and mine, when it comes to my stuff, leave me alone.

There are things in all our lives we have a need not to touch. A place that we will enter only when we have no other option, or once in a great while when we discover a very best, most trustworthy, beloved friend.

There can be great comfort in recognizing that, even though most of us, are not perfect, we can be deeply known and accepted for who we are. Far too often we recognize these deep and meaningful relationships only after great loss: separations due to school, a fight, war, work, disease or death.

But if there is not enough trust of ourselves or others, at times those that come to know us and care about us touch our brokenness, awaken our pain, loneliness, need for reconciliation, and receive kickback for their attempt at relationship.

How has an awareness of being known deeply brought you comfort? Or pain? Or been recognized too late?

More than once, starting at a very early age and continuing on through today, I have wondered, like the Psalmist, what is out there and sometimes in here possibly infinitely greater than I am that is the oneness in all things, that mysterious energy, wonder, that rests at the edge of my awareness and yet knows me more than I know myself?

In today's scripture, the Psalmist wrestles with the concepts of omnipresence (all present), omniscience (all knowing), and omnificence (all creative power), concepts written about within Hebrew Scriptures, in the Hindu, Altharva Veda's, but also written about by the Canaanites, Greeks and in Islam¹ This form of human wondering developed in the sphere of the personal I-Thou relationships between humans and holiness.

Martin Buber's *I and Thou* (*Ich und Du*, 1923) presents a philosophy of personal dialogue, in that it describes how personal dialogue can define the nature of reality. Buber's major theme is that human existence may be defined by the way in which we engage in dialogue with each other, with the world, and with God.

According to Buber, human beings may adopt two attitudes toward the world: *I-Thou* or *I-It*. *I-Thou* is a relation of subject-to-subject, while *I-It* is a relation of subject-to-object. In the *I-Thou* relationship, human beings are aware of each other as having a unity of being. In the *I-Thou* relationship, human beings do not perceive each other as consisting of specific, isolated qualities, but engage in a dialogue involving each other's whole being. In the *I-It* relationship, on the other hand, human beings perceive each other as consisting of specific, isolated qualities, and view themselves as part of a world which consists of things. *I-Thou* is a relationship of mutuality and reciprocity, while *I-It* is a relationship of separateness and detachment."²

In the postmodern world, many people find it hard to embrace a sense of deep connection, a connectivity between I and the sense of that which is greater, where the I-Thou awe and wonder can exist. We live in a world most commonly made up of I-It relationships. A world of relationships communicated by phrases like, "What have you done for me lately" "Your value is what you produce." I-It relationships allow us to define the world in discreet, controllable units, objects. Often we define our own lives on what we can purchase, seeking to keep people at arm's length because it is easier to climb up on a human ladder of success if you don't care about the thing you are standing on. People then are just another commodity to manipulate; the earth just another source from which to extract resources and in which to bury waste.

What kinds of relationships are you practicing at work, at home, in the highways and byways?

This text seeks to communicate how we are known and loved by God. We respond to this intimate relationship with praise. We heed God's call, and act in ways that respect each person as one created and loved by God.

As each of us individually and our church as a whole grow in understanding all people as known and loved by God, how might our actions change?

¹ The Psalms, A Commentary, by Arthur Weiser, Copy right 1962, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, pg. 801

² Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, translated by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 26