

*Trinitarian Congregational Church*  
August 30, 2020  
Take Out

**Prelude** Joyful, Joyful  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GD6i9EuEGTM>

**Call to Worship**

One: Come people of God, gather for worship.

God welcomes you in hope and peace.

**All: Thanks be to God who invites us into life's holy places.  
Here we receive good news to share with the world.**

One: Look to the heavens for inspiration and assurance;

Look around you, for God's presence is everywhere.

**All: Thanks be to God who invites us into life's holy places.  
Here we receive good news to share with the world.**

One: Let us draw on the gift of God's Spirit;

Let us follow Christ in faith and faithfulness.

**All: Thanks be to God who invites us into life's holy places.  
Here we receive good news to share with the world.**

**Gathering Prayer**

**O God, you have said 'Seek my face' and we have responded to your call. And so we ask you to meet us here today. We need this hour to remember who we are, to let you gather us under your wings. We need this time to feel close to one another, to recognize ourselves as brothers and sisters. We need reminders of the humanity and glory of Jesus Christ that empower our discipleship and our service in this world. Open our hearts to all you would offer us. Amen.**

**Scripture** Psalm 27 Ephesians 3:14-21

Psalm 27

<sup>1</sup> The LORD is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?

<sup>2</sup> When evildoers assail me  
to devour my flesh—  
my adversaries and foes—  
they shall stumble and fall.

<sup>3</sup> Though an army encamp against me,  
my heart shall not fear;

though war rise up against me,  
yet I will be confident.  
<sup>4</sup> One thing I asked of the LORD,  
that will I seek after:  
to live in the house of the LORD  
all the days of my life,  
to behold the beauty of the LORD,  
and to inquire in his temple.  
<sup>5</sup> For he will hide me in his shelter  
in the day of trouble;  
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;  
he will set me high on a rock.  
<sup>6</sup> Now my head is lifted up  
above my enemies all around me,  
and I will offer in his tent  
sacrifices with shouts of joy;  
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.  
<sup>7</sup> Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud,  
be gracious to me and answer me!  
<sup>8</sup> “When you said, “seek my face!”  
My heart replied “Your face, LORD, do I seek.”  
<sup>9</sup> Do not hide your face from me.  
Do not turn your servant away in anger,  
you who have been my help.  
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,  
O God of my salvation!  
<sup>10</sup> If my father and mother forsake me,  
the LORD will take me up.  
<sup>11</sup> Teach me your way, O LORD,  
and lead me on a level path  
because of my enemies.  
<sup>12</sup> Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,  
for false witnesses have risen against me,  
and they are breathing out violence.  
<sup>13</sup> I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD  
in the land of the living.  
<sup>14</sup> Wait for the LORD;  
be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the LORD!

#### Ephesians 3:14-21

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, <sup>17</sup> and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. <sup>18</sup> I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and

depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup> Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

**Special Music**                      Be Thou My Vision  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TOcFKkmTZ8>

## **Sermon**    **Thin Places**

What are some of your favorite down-time activities? (State your answers) Now what are some of your favorite spiritual activities? (State your answers) In your mind do you make a distinction between the two? Why or why not? For me I have some distinctly ‘spiritual practices’ like reading and prayers. And I have some broader patterns that seem less religious, like cooking and hiking.

But here’s the thing – God is everywhere and in everything, so the separation really is not there, at least for God. And sometimes that sense of separation disappears for us too. This week as I was driving route 10 into town I came to a part of the road that opens up to a vista of the hills. They were green and lush and shrouded in mist. And I responded by saying ‘wow, God, that is so lovely. Thanks for the hills, and for being called here to TCC.’ In that moment nature opened my spirit, and my daily life was ‘filled with the glory of God’.

The early Celtic people who lived in the British Isles had a name for those special places and event, where they believed, you could be closer to God. They called them "thin places." And they are called “thin places” because at those moments and in those place “the veil between this world and the next is so sheer you can almost step through.” It should be no surprise then, that when Christianity spread to the British Isles they freely incorporated the idea of ‘thin places’ into the Celtic Church.

This morning we have begun to explore our personal ‘thin places’, where God seems always close by and you find peace with the world. Of course, Scripture itself acts as a thin place for God’s people. There are certain passages of Scripture that are very effective in transporting us, here and now, to a special place where we meet God. The words and images of Psalm 27 are like that – they lead us to a kind of thin place where human and divine meet in a beautiful closeness.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the stronghold of my life,  
of whom shall I be afraid?

You have said, 'seek my face.'  
My heart replies 'Your face, O Lord, I seek.  
Do not hide your face from me.'

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living."

This psalm is a meeting place for a very close relationship! Psalm 27 is a gift to us because it speaks of a very full and true relationship with God. The first part of the psalm points us to a sure faith and a deep trust in God. It is God's acts of faithfulness in the past, and his promise for the future that forms that trust. The psalmist begins his song of praise with a bold confidence by proclaiming God is "my light," and follows his assurance by acknowledging God as "my salvation." His song convey a relationship with God that is comforting, and warm and personal.

But the surprising character of Psalm 27 is that it is not just another dreamy picture of a divine encounter. Along with the assurance of God's cherished closeness with us there is the gritty reality that questions God's presence. Along with words of confidence the Psalmist also exclaims:

"Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud,  
be gracious to me and answer me!

Do not turn your servant away in anger...  
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,  
O God of my salvation!

Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries  
for false witnesses have risen against me,  
and they are breathing out violence."

The psalmist doesn't just call on God as his "light" and "salvation", he also admits our very human need for help in times of despair and anxiety.

One biblical scholar has noted that the book of Psalms "is one of the most important books in the Bible because of its exquisite ability to seize human experience like a harp and strum on every one of its strings." This psalm is a thin place for meeting God in our everyday lives – where the strings of our experience strum both the rich notes of gratitude and trust and the harsh ones of anguish and despair. With low notes and high notes, this psalm invokes in us a desire for a genuine friendship with God. and it reminds us of the need to attend to our own personal relationship with God.

Dorothy Bass is a historian of American religion who tries to bring the life of faith close to home in practical ways. She knows that often we ask one another "How was your day?" Whenever my husband Greg or I walk into the house at the end of the day we greeted one another with that very question – "How was your day?" That's the kind of question which usually comes from someone who really cares. But often our answer is a vague response like, "Not bad." "Most days," Dorothy Bass remarks, "we probably forget to notice."

But she tells the story of a mother she knows who has quite a different way of asking that question. As she tucks her children into bed each night, after they've taken their bath and their

teeth are brushed, she asks them this question: "Where did you meet God today?" And they tell her, one by one: a teacher helped me, there was a homeless person in the park, I saw a tree with lots of flowers on it. Then she tells them where she met God too. Before the children drop off to sleep, the stuff of their day has become the substance of prayer. They enter a thin place, where they know God's presence and care.

This story reminds us, as Psalm 27 reminds us, that to seek and find those thin places where we feel close to God – requires practice. It requires a disciplined practice to recognize that the 'thin places' where we can encounter the very presence of God are all around us. It takes disciplined practice to sense them and disciplined practice to remain open to them. They are simply waiting to be discovered. We can find them in church (at least I hope we can) but also at work and at home, in hospitals and in schools, among hills and by the sea, really anyplace and everyplace where it becomes clear to you that God is very near.

And so today, while we are surrounded by this 'thin place' along the river, I invite you at the end of the service to take the time to find your thin place and meet with God. You can take a walk, sit in silence or in meditation, even join together in prayer or in conversations about the goodness of God you have seen, or the need for God you are experiencing.

May this day, this 'thin place', be a blessing to you

Amen.

### **Joy and Concerns**

As you meet with God in prayer, please lift up the joys and concerns shared through the Trumpet Blast. God is eager to be your help and strength, to listen to you and meet your needs. Prayer is a gift we can always use.

### **Prayers of the People**

God of thin places and holy encounters, we are grateful for the opportunity we have to draw near to you. We thank you for the places and times of peace, and for your presence, help and guidance when we struggle. We thank you for meeting us in Christ and remaining with us by your Spirit. And so we come to you now with the confidence that you hear our prayers and answer us with goodness and grace.

We pray, Holy God, for your church and for this congregation. May we know the companionship of your Spirit, the joy of faith, and the power of service. May this church become for others a 'thin place' of your blessing and care.

We pray, Mighty God, for our world and for all who are called as leaders among us. May they know your strength and wisdom as they seek to bring justice and peace to the world, and may all people experience the rich blessing of your grace. Empower all your children with grace that we may accomplish your good will in the world.

We pray, Loving God, for all who cry out to you today. May those who are seeking discover your love, those who are discouraged know your hope, and those who are weary know your strength. Grant also your healing to the ill, your comfort to the sorrowful, and your aid to the needy. And grant that we, who enjoy your great blessings, may reach out with compassion and generosity towards all who are in need, here in our community and throughout the world.

We thank you, Faithful God, for the many blessings you have granted to your people gathered here. We thank you for... and we ask your continued care for... Bless us now with your wondrous presence as we come before you in the quiet of our hearts...

We praise you, Gracious God, for all your goodness and mercy towards us, through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray...

### **Lord's Prayer**

### **Benediction**

Go now into the world

and may the amazing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ  
the extravagant love of God  
and the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit  
be with each and every one of you. Now and always.      2 Cor 13:14

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

Postlude

Love Divine

#86

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fL4Hi6ebEtQ>