

Straight from the "Hart"

May 28, 2023

Pentecost - Memorial



Sharing the journey
to know, love, and serve



Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are glad you are here and participating in today's time of worship by reading this script. This was Pentecost and Memorial Sunday, so let's begin with the pledges....

Pledges

American Flag

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America,
and to the Republic for which it stands:
one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Christian Flag

I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag and to the Savior
for whose kingdom it stands. One Savior, crucified, risen, and coming again
with life and liberty to all who believe, uniting all humanity in service and in love.

Bible

I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's Holy Word,
I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path
and will hide its words in my heart that I might not sin against God.

Music

God of the Ages

Words: Daniel C. Roberts, 1876 Music: George W. Warren, 1894

1. God of the ages, whose almighty hand
leads forth in beauty all the starry band
of shining worlds in splendor through the skies,
our grateful songs before thy throne arise.

2. Thy love divine hath led us in the past;
in this free land with thee our lot is cast;
be thou our ruler, guardian, guide, and stay,
thy Word our law, thy paths our chosen way.
4. Refresh thy people on their toilsome way;
lead us from night to never-ending day;
fill all our lives with love and grace divine,
and glory, laud, and praise be ever thine.

Prayer for the Nation

God of all the ages, in your sight nations rise and fall, and pass through times of prosperity and times of peril. As we remember especially those who died in service to our country, and also those family and friends who have gone before making their corner of the country a better place, we pray for the spiritual health of our nation. As you reveal your light and truth, may leaders search for your will, see it clearly, and be guided by your wisdom. Teach them -- and us -- to see people by the light of the faith we profess, that we may restrain in ourselves all ungenerous judgments, all presumptuous claims, that, recognizing the needs and rightful claims of others, we may remove old hatreds and rivalries and hasten new understandings, that we may bring our attributes of excellence to the treasury of our common humanity; through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of this world, and this nation, and is our Savior. Amen.

Opening Prayer Holy God, we open ourselves to the power of your Spirit. We give you ourselves. Through us, and these gifts, may others realize there is new life in Christ, for you kindle within a flame of sacred love which leaps and runs in an inextinguishable blaze. We come to be warmed by your fires and refreshed by your grace, that our devotion to live in your love will increase throughout the land, that your will may fully and effectively be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Inspired by from UM Book of Worship: Aldersgate Day (when John Wesley felt "his heart strangely warmed" on May 24, 1738 -- crucial for his own life and a touchstone for the Wesleyan movement).

(Series) Responsive Call to Worship with *Bind Us Together*

Reader: Come, all who have experienced and entrusted their lives to the love of God in us. Come, all who desire to live faithfully in love and in God. God is love, and truly lives in us and we in him if we love one another.

Congregation: We have come so that God's love will accomplish its mission in and among us.

Inspired by 1 John 4:16, 12b (VOICE)

Bind Us Together

Words and Music: Bob Gillman, 1977 © Kingsway's Thank You Music

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together with cords that cannot be broken.

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, Lord, bind us together in love.

Bible Reading with commentary (P – Pastor, R - Reader)

P: Pentecost is considered the birth of the Christian church, and its purpose, according to Jesus, is to empower his followers to communicate about Jesus to everyone in ever expanding ripples like a rock dropped in a pond, it just keeps going out and out and out ...

R: Just before Jesus ascended back to heaven, he told his disciples, "... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 (NLT)

P: Now some very brief snippets capturing what is most important for us today from the original story. First the event:

R: On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit...

Acts 2:1-4a (NLT)

P: Then the reaction and explanation...

R: At that time there were devout Jews from every nation [staying] in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers... Then Peter stepped forward... "what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people...'

"God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him... God raised Jesus from the dead, and ... now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's

right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today... Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away – all who have been called by the Lord our God.

Acts 2:1-4a, 5-6,14a,16-17a, 22b,32a,33, 38b-39 (NLT)

P: So all who turn from their sins and believe in Jesus are gifted with the Holy Spirit to communicate our belief in Jesus, but not just with words, but by the way we live our lives, for

R: we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. 1 John 3:2 (NLT)

P: And until that day, we make it our goal to strive to do our best to live according to his way of forgiving grace and love. We do this when we

R: Put the word into action. If you think hearing is what matters most, you deceive yourselves. If you listen to the word, but fail to do what it says, it's as if they forget the word as soon as they hear it. One minute they look in the mirror, and the next they forget who they are and what they look like. But whoever looks intently into the beautiful, perfect truth found in God's law that gives freedom, and continues to live by it – not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do.

James 1:22-25 (VOICE, NIV)

P: And in that living that reflects the life of Jesus, we are blessed, for

R: the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image. 2 Corinthians 3:18b (NLT)

Theme

I have a mirror. If all of you at home look really close, maybe you can see yourself. 😊) While in my imagination, some people use mirrors to admire themselves and unnecessarily build already oversized egos (apparently); in fairy tales they are used to compare and contrast and speak to who is the fairest in the land; but most of the time they serve a good



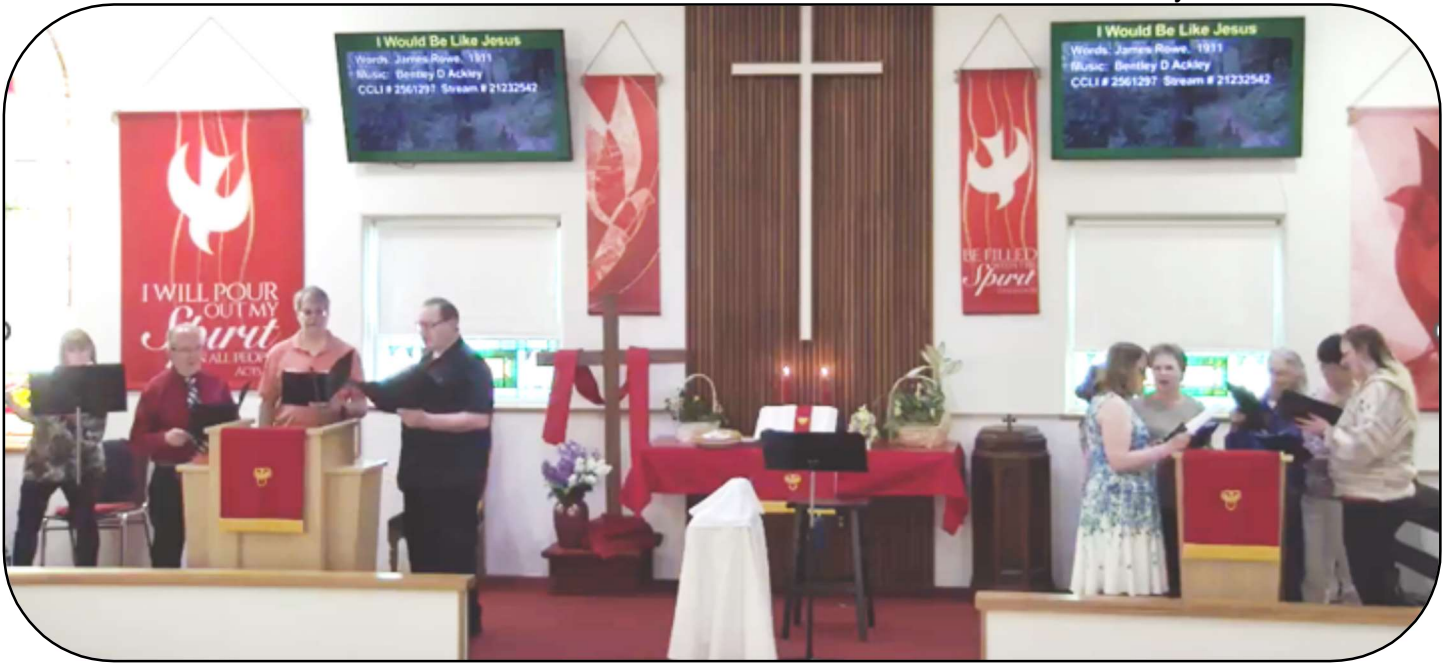
purpose. In gyms, their purpose is to make sure we are using good form, so that we don't hurt ourselves. In dentist offices and auto shops and other places, they are used to help see places we can't otherwise easily see. In homes, they help us notice what might be out of place so that we can be our best presentable self before we leave the house -- although a stand-up comedian said something like this ...

I dress down to perpetuate the myth that I'm a fixer upper. Like the shirt I'm wearing (and what he was wearing was a light blue, kind of casual button-down shirt like I have, except it was designed to be tucked in (you know the ones that are cut shorter on the sides) but he didn't have it tucked in). "This shirt", he said, "is my A shirt. It wasn't that I spilled mustard on my A shirt, and so I had to use my B shirt... I've reached a point in my life where I don't really look in mirror before I leave my apartment. I glance at it to make sure I'm not bleeding. You know what I mean? But I don't stare at the mirror, if I stare at the mirror, I get angry, I feel like I'm complaining about a bad call the ref just made, 'Come ooonnnn!!!... You're blind if you are leaving the house like that!' And the ref is God, and the competing team is my gut and receding hair line, (and by the way, he didn't have a gut and receding hair line, so I don't know what he is talking about). But he says -- "and it is a close game because my gut is large and my hairline is fast and I'm all riled up and I'm about to charge the field in anger, but then the guy comes by with fried dough, and I so I say 'Mmmm, maybe next time.' munch, munch, munch, much"...

(Mike Birbiglia in My Girlfriend's Boyfriend)

Well, our theology says we are all fixer-uppers, not about outward appearance but about character development. And James (towards the end of the last reading we have) understands that mirrors are used to expose and fix the fixable flaws that we might have, and when it comes to character, looking in the mirror means looking into God's word, into the life of Jesus, and it exposes what transformation might be left for us to work on, by the power of his Spirit..., and then when we leave the house, we may better reflect Jesus to others as well...

Special Music We are reminded that there are many distractions that keep us from looking intently into the mirror of God's work, things that would tie us down from fixing what we see as wrong, of being his witnesses wherever we go, and so we are going to sing the prayer that I hope is the desire for all of us: that we would be like Jesus...



I Would Be Like Jesus

Words: James Rowe, 1911 Music: Bentley D Ackley

1. Earthly pleasures vainly call me; I would be like Jesus;
nothing worldly shall enthrall me; I would be like Jesus.

Refrain

Be like Jesus, this my song, in the home and in the throng;
Be like Jesus, all day long! I would be like Jesus.

2. He has broken ev'ry fetter, I would be like Jesus;
that my soul may serve him better, I would be like Jesus.

Refrain

3 All the way from earth to glory, I would be like Jesus;
Telling o'er and o'er the story, I would be like Jesus.

Refrain

4 That in heaven he may meet me, I would be like Jesus;
that his words "Well done" may greet me, I would be like Jesus.

Refrain

Music And if we are going to be like him, then we are going to have to seek him and stay in connection with him and seek him with, as James said – with intentional intensity. Let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

Words and Music: Helen Howarth Lemmel, 1922

1. O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior, and life more abundant and free!

Refrain

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face,
and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

3. His word shall not fail you -- he promised; believe him and all will be well:
then go to a world that is dying, his perfect salvation to tell!

Refrain

Prayers

Our heavenly Father, Holy Spirit, Jesus, we are only beginning to understand the depths of what you have done for us. We hear your command to love. We know it is only by your Spirit living in us that we can do what you did, and it is only as we stay aware of your presence, as we fix our eyes on you, that we can mirror your glory, and the majesty of your covenant, bringing all glory and honor to your name.

Save us from being self-centered in our prayers and teach us to remember to pray for others. May we be so bound up in love with those for whom we pray that we feel their needs as acutely as our own, and intercede for them with sensitiveness, with understanding and with imagination.

Petitions Therefore, we offer our prayers today for all those that we name in our minds and hearts, who are going through a difficult time for a wide variety of issues. including * Jan's brother Reese and son Calvin, heading for a court date yet, * for Randy Bell who will be undergoing radiation treatments and tests in the weeks ahead, * for those studying abroad, (for Jes), * for all those problems that we hear about in the news, on the streets, from neighbors and friends, loved ones. And this Memorial Day we remember as well. Be with us in our grief, and in the celebration of our country. There are more things that have not been named out loud but remain in our hearts and minds, and we are confident in our requests because of all you have done for us, all you empower us to do, is made possible by your Son, Jesus, who promises to come to us in the form of a new blood covenant shaped in the intimacy of a private upper room, where he taught us to love, and he also continues to teach us to live by the pray he taught us to pray. **Lord's Prayer**

Intro to and Bible Reading 2

Today, as we talk about God's friendship, we are exploring ways to connect with him and make the most of spending our time with him. Isaac instructed his son Jacob to go to another city and find a wife and blessed him with instructions to multiply and become a whole community of people. (So no pressure on this young

man at all. 😞) Enroute to this new area, he stopped for the night. He laid down to sleep using a stone for a pillow. He dreamed of a stairway that went from earth to heaven and angels going up and coming down on it. The Lord stood above the staircase and promised him the fulfillment of his mission. Summary of Genesis 28:1-5,10-14a)



“... All the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. I am with you and will watch over you and protect you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you.” When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it.” But he was also afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; the very gateway to heaven.” Early the next morning Jacob took the stone on which he had rested his head and set it upright as a memorial pillar and poured olive oil over it. He called that place Bethel, (which means “house of God”) ... Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking, and if he will provide me with food and clothing, and if I return safely to my father’s home, then the Lord will certainly be my God, and this memorial pillar that I have set up ~~as a pillar~~ will become a place for worshiping God, and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me.”

Genesis 28:14b-22 (NIV, NLT)

Music This next song is based on this close encounter of God with Jacob.

Nearer, My God, to Thee

Words: Sarah F. Adams, 1841 Music: Lowell Mason, 1856

1. Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,
still all my song shall be, nearer, my God,
to thee; nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
2. Though like the wanderer, the sun gone down,
darkness be over me, my rest a stone;
yet in my dreams I'd be nearer, my God,
to thee; nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

3. There let the way appear, steps unto heaven;
 all that thou sendest me, in mercy given;
 angels to beckon me nearer, my God, to thee;
 nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Sermon Finding Thin Spots

We just passed the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, sometimes called the Feast of Weeks, because the days are counted from Passover – 50 days, which is why it is sometimes called Pentecost. This day is rooted in grain offerings – the first fruits of the grain harvest were to be brought in a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It also celebrates the giving of the Law through Moses and the figurative marriage covenant between God and Israel, and is therefore considered a joyful time, celebration.

So when, in the first reading, Luke wrote that the disciples were gathered on the Day of Pentecost, he was not referring to our Christian Pentecost, he was referring to that festival which both happen – we both count 50 days from Passover, and Pentecost means “fifty days”, so there we are. One of the reasons that there were so many Jews speaking different languages present was because of the Jewish Pentecost which brought people over from many different areas of the world to Jerusalem. The wind and the fire that is described in that story is a common way of representing God’s powerful presence, in fact the word for Spirit means “wind.”

Some people suggest a connection between this harvested grain offering of the Jewish Pentecost and the Christian Pentecost because Luke records that 3,000 Jews were added to the Christian faith that day, and sometimes, converts were talked about in terms of a harvest – even last week Jesus spoke of the people of God as wheat seeds growing in the world. We were referred to as seeds of wheat growing in the field. I tend to think that is a bit of a stretch to put the two holidays together that way.

Nevertheless, for our purposes today, we are working on *friendship with God*. I have referred to how close Moses and God had become before and during their very difficult journey through the wilderness to the promised land. Wherever they went, they set up a tent of meeting outside the camp where Moses met with God, they were so close that people could see God’s friendship in his face, it glowed – so to speak, kind of like pregnant women “You can see the glow”. And it scared them so much so that unless Moses was in a meeting with the people or with God, he wore a veil to hide God’s glorious presence. (See Exodus 34:29ff) It was just

prior to this that Moses had been up in the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments,— the promises and commitments of the marriage covenant – the vows, if you will, between God and his people. It is a great and glorious celebration.

Paul takes this passage and interprets it rabbinically, in ways that we would never be allowed to do. He says that Moses wore the veil to hide the fact that the radiant glory of God’s presence in Moses’ face faded, showing that this covenant was temporary and fading, and as marvelous as that relationship was, it was nothing compared to the new covenant Jesus would establish by God’s Spirit, a permanent covenant of life and freedom and ever-increasing glory. (2 Corinthians 3:7-18)

If we only live according to Moses, the veil still covers our heart, Paul says, but if we turn to the Lord through Christ, the veil is removed and we have direct access and connection to God in ways that the old temporary, formal, external, legal covenant could not accomplish. This new, permanent, heart-motivated, Spirit-filled personal relationship leads to right relationship and out of that right relationship comes right living, because the more and more we begin to accurately gaze into God, the more we begin to reflect the image of God.

Where I last lived there is a contest sponsored by the Rotary Club. They put a vintage sled (snowmobile) on the canal and the people pay to guess when it will drop through the ice. They made a point to say that it would do no environmental damage and it was tethered so that it would not remain in the water. The one who most closely predicts that date, hour, and minute the sled fall through wins half of how many guesses were paid for, up to 1,000 dollars. Some parts of the water freeze harder and thicker than other parts of the water. We all know that right? There are thick spots and thin spots separating the water world from the air world. It illustrates an old Irish idea of “thin places” where it seems God more easily breaks through -- not from air to water, but from the world of the heavenly spirit world to the earthly physical world in which we currently inhabit. Though we may have to adjust that a little because God is everywhere, easily – it isn’t that God has to struggle more or less to “break through”, but on our side – there are places, settings, or situations, or circumstances in which we more easily recognize God’s presence than in other places. Where or what might those things be?

We could go around the room and all of you could probably call out different ways that you more easily experience God. Where, or with who, or doing what...

With friends – we bond with them when we discover and take an interest in what they have done and do – what kind of projects do they throw themselves into?

Perhaps some of these are thin places where you build that relationship with them, and it is those kinds of places where “What has God thrown himself into?” and we think about all the things that he does. Perhaps some places that are thin for you, where you sense God more easily is when you make the quilts for the ministry of quilting, the home-made banners for the hallway, or on this Memorial weekend, taking care of the plots of loved ones, or baking meals or cookies for people who need encouragement – I suspect for Ben, a thin spot could be bowling, and for Sara, drawing. We heard last week thin spots are holding your newborn, or at other major events in the lives of loved ones – and Jerry even had soundtracks to back the major events of his kids – that is kind of cool, it is like he is living a movie...

Nature also – is a big one for a lot of people. But let me throw this in – with these things I just mentioned, and what you may have mentioned if you had the chance – is that we have to be *aware* that God is with us and enjoying those things with us. Just because it is a thin spot doesn't mean we have broken through to God. We can recognize God's presence wherever we are and whatever we do, but we have to be intentional about it.

If Sara draws an excellent drawing and we all come and admire the drawing – and we go on and on about the drawing, but completely ignore that Sara is in the room – we haven't really broken through into a relationship with her, have we? Just her work.

I remember an old Ziggy cartoon; do you remember Ziggy? The sun was setting, and he was giving it a standing ovation for a glorious sunset that was made. In my mind, that was acknowledging not just the beauty of nature, but the One who painted the sky with its brilliant colors of yellows, oranges, and pinks...against the blues and whites of the clouds in that sunset.

Moses met with God on the mountain and then in the tent of meeting, which always stood outside the camp as a symbol of God's presence. People saw it and they knew God was with them. Once the Temple was built, it was a constant reminder to the people of Jerusalem that God was with them. That is the reason that once the Temple was destroyed, and the one remaining wall is called a wailing wall because to many, it was a reminder that it *felt* like God's presence wasn't with them anymore. They lost that reminder that he was with them.

Water and mountain tops and wildernesses and upper rooms seemed to be thin places for Jesus and the disciples. Jesus was baptized in Jordan River and we hear heaven opened and the Spirit come down, and again in the transfiguration

that we didn't talk about last week, but that is when we celebrate that it happened, it was on a mountain when again the heavens were opened and the Spirit descended. Jesus often retreated to hills and to gardens, to pray... It was in an upper room that the risen Jesus appeared, the disciples were staying in an upper room, but it was probably at the Temple somewhere (for they were there all the time (Luke 24:52) after Jesus ascended. They were waiting for the Holy Spirit – and the Christian Pentecost happened while they were celebrating the Jewish Pentecost.

For many people, this very room that you are now sitting in, is one of those special thin places where it is easier to sense God's presence in ways that we can't easily do elsewhere because we are with each other in this sacred place.

But deep friendship goes beyond the enjoyable times together, as important as it is to share these things with others and with God. Sometimes it isn't just the place, it is the circumstances. Last week's transfiguration – we talk about the Spirit coming down, but there was also a deep discussion about Jesus' Exodus, the way he was going to leave this earth.

Jacob was in the middle of nowhere, being sent on a mission to start a community all by himself. I don't know what he was like, but that would have scared the dickens out of me. All alone, middle of the night, and I suspect it was his circumstances that made that spot such a very thin spot in his dreams. Sometimes it is the struggles of the world that makes God's presence so easily accessible to us. The world seems to be escalating in the wrong direction, away from love and toward hate. That makes it a tough spot. But maybe that can also make it a thin spot.

I don't remember the source, but I heard someone speculate about what would happen if space aliens came and observed our behavior on this earth, and how mean we are to each other. And then they came and asked someone on earth about it, "Why are you all so mean to each other?" (I'm cleaning up this story a little bit since we are in this room). "Are you all so awful to each other?" The answer from this human was, "Well, no, Jesus and Martin Luther King lived and told us to be nice to each other." "Well, what happened to them?" "We killed them." "You really are an awful world!"

These negative circumstances make for thin spots. Martin Luther King saw the oppression of certain groups and worked for a peaceful transition to make a better country and a better world. The hardness of his mission probably made his life a

thin spot where he and God often broke through together, both wanting to alleviate the suffering and oppression of people; just as it was with Moses as he struggled to lead the people in difficult and dangerous circumstances. The challenges drove them to see God in the very midst of the troubles, be they international and catastrophic, or very personal.

I remember going into the Holocaust Museum when I was in Israel. Our tour group was on a tight schedule, we had a tough tour guide. He kept us moving along, so we couldn't linger very long, but with just a glimpse of that place – and how painful it is to think that people can treat each other like that. It is hard to wrap your mind around how warped people's minds had to be to justify that kind of behavior toward another human being. We have to know our history, or we will repeat it.

Then on the personal side of it, William Barry describes a theologian Belden Lane, who found an unlikely thin place in a nursing home where his mother was dying of cancer and Alzheimer's. She had tried to rip out her feeding tube and he had to call for help and they had to put mittens on her, and it was a messy situation. Then this is how he describes it –

There she lay --- miserable, stripped of dignity, incapable of helping herself in the least way --- and now betrayed by a son whose best intentions had only made things worse. I left the room, choking on my own helplessness. But the unexpected occurred that afternoon when I returned to the nursing home. My mother was resting quietly by then, the gloves removed. She looked up and said to me gently, in an unusual moment of lucidity, "Don't cry, Belden. It's natural to have to do this. It's all a part of dying." With those words a window suddenly opened. By an unanticipated grace, (he wrote) I found healing through the one I'd meant to comfort.

Is it possible that through a negative thin place, God is calling us to sense him and do something that he would have us to do? Even if it seems that life is already beating us up enough – to still enter those hard spots and places? Not long ago I saw a story about a man living on the streets, in Arizona. He heard yelling and went running to find an apartment house was on fire with entrances all blocked by flames. The yelling was coming from a mother from her 2nd story bedroom window. He encouraged her to hand down go him her daughters and herself. And one at a time, she handed down, first two dogs and then two daughters, (Natalie, 8 years old, and Valerie, 1 year old).

Then it was the mother's turn, but she was afraid to jump. He kept encouraging, "I got you, don't worry." and finally she jumped, and he caught her, and all were safe without any serious injuries. Later, the mother said that he was the only one around, and because of him we are alive, and my daughters are safe. When asked about his heroic actions, he shrugged it off, saying, "*Anybody* would do it." The commentator reporting the stories said that he is incorrect, not everyone would do it. The rescuer added, "I did what he had to do, and I was in the right place at the right time, and I was happy to help."



A second commenters added, "Everything is connected when people see people as people. He valued them." And then the first commentor concluded, "I'm emotional, (and he was slightly breaking up as he spoke) because I know a lot of people would not have done that for him. Yet he had no hesitation to do it for someone else. This all happened not that long after another homeless man on the other side of the country was strangled to death because he yelled on a subway, and his attacker, by some, is lauded as the hero. When opportunities, dramatic or mundane, come to the thin spaces of our life – are we able to step up to do what we'd like to think "*anybody* would do"?"

There are always heroic stories in the midst of the atrocities throughout history. We talked about going through the holocaust museum. There are stories of people who went against the grain and acted nobly in horrible, horrible times.

And of course, there is that unholy hill that crucified prisoners and rebels, but then the fateful day came when Jesus was also brought to that place. And we wonder what the world was thinking.... Can that be a thin place? A place where people discover and grasp God in that horrific event?

Communion is another thin spot for many of us... so let's turn to the table and experience his presence with us there.

Communion

Invitation Jesus Christ invites all who love and seek to grow into his likeness into an upper room to experience his Last Supper and new covenant through him with God. Let us draw near with faith, make our humble confession, and prepare to receive this holy sacrament.

Music Let's prepare to move our hearts nearer to God's heart through communion by singing

Near to the Heart of God

Words: Cleland B. McAfee, 1903 Music: Cleland B. McAfee, 1903

1. There is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God;
a place where sin cannot molest, near to the heart of God.

Refrain

O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God,
hold us who wait before thee near to the heart of God.

2. There is a place of comfort sweet, near to the heart of God;
a place where we our Savior meet, near to the heart of God.

Refrain

3. There is place a place of full release, near to the heart of God;
a place where all is joy and peace, near to the heart of God.

Refrain

Confession

Let's continue to prepare by a time of prayerful confession.

Lord, you have made many opportunities to find the thin places, to discover your presence. We saw it on the mountain, in the wilderness, in the upper rooms. We see heaven and earth come together, focused in Christ. And we recognize that we haven't been as human as we should be. We get caught up in selfishness, and cynicism, and pride, and vain pursuits. Our eyes have become blind to your love, our ears deaf to the cries of the needy. We fall short of loving you and loving others in your name.

Yet you call us into the upper room to participate in your last Supper and new covenant. You wash our feet and tell us to remove from our lives: hatred and prejudice, and contempt for those who are not as ourselves, departing from everything that would divide, that we may be brought into unity of spirit, and into the bond of peace.

Jesus Christ, you are the way of peace. Come into the brokenness of our lives and land with your healing love. Help us to be willing to bow before you in true repentance, and to one another in real forgiveness. By the fire of your Holy Spirit,

melt our hard hearts and consume the pride and prejudice which separate us. Fill us, O Lord, with your perfect love, which casts out our fear. Bind us together in that unity which you share with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Assurance

This is the message we have heard from God and proclaim to you, that God is light and in God there is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. So now may the Almighty God, who caused light to shine out of darkness, shine in our hearts, cleansing us from all our sins, and restoring us to the light of the knowledge of God's glory, in the presence of Jesus Christ, our Savior. With that assurance, we are forgiven.

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. In the beginning your Spirit moved over the face of the waters. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. Your Spirit came upon prophets and teachers, anointing them to speak your Word. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. At his baptism in the Jordan your Spirit descended upon him and declared him your beloved Son. With your Spirit upon him he turned away the temptations of sin. Your Spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

On the day you raised Jesus from the dead, he was recognized by his disciples in the breaking of the bread, When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always, baptizing us with the Holy Spirit and with fire, which began on the Day of Pentecost, and now in the power of your Holy Spirit, your Church has continued in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup. And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and at home, and on these gifts, these elements of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood and empowered by the gifts of the Spirit. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, showing forth the fruit of the Spirit until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

Receiving the Bread and Cup

On the night in which he was betrayed and gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."



Prayer Lord, we bless your name this day for sending the light and strength of your Holy Spirit. We give you thanks for all gifts great and small that you have poured out upon your children. Accept us and equip us to become a united force of living praise and witness to your love throughout all the land through Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, and the Father who live in unity, one God, forever. Amen.

Music So as our final song of prayer today, let's ask that the Spirit bind us together in ever closer friendship to our God.

Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart

Words: George Croly, 1867 Music: Frederick C. Atkinson, 1870

1. Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;
stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art,
and make me love thee as I ought to love.
3. Has thou not bid me love thee, God and King?
All, all thine own, soul, heart and strength and mind.
I see thy cross; there teach my heart to cling.
O let me seek thee, and O let me find.
5. Teach me to love thee as thine angels love,
one holy passion filling all my frame;
the kindling of the heaven-descended Dove,
my heart an altar, and thy love the flame.

^ **Blessing** Now as a child of the Father, as Christ's friend, go out to the world in the power of the Spirit -- with your heart set on Christ who draws all people to himself and binds us together in love. Amen.

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