

**Looking Down from Heaven as God and Maker**  
**Psalm 63:1-8**  
**June 25, 2023**

Early Celtic Christians spoke of “thin places” in the world. A thin place is a location or moment where the veil separating the physical from the spiritual world becomes so thin that one can begin to recognize God’s presence.

Sometimes that thin place revealed God as warm, comforting and loving and could leave the Christian feeling at perfect peace. Other times they experienced God in His transcendent glory and power, requiring the pilgrim to fall flat on their face in awe and reverence.

Whether they experienced a warm embrace, fell flat on their face or something in-between, they left that place saying, “There you are.”

This summer we are in the book of Psalms, exploring different metaphors that describe how we can engage God as we find Him meeting us in all the ups and downs of life. That engagement can come in many different forms and today we will look at one of the hardest forms for some to grasp. I am talking about engaging God as the Almighty, One who looks down on us from heaven as our Creator and King.

It is hard for us to grasp this because we’ve been raised to believe that we are all equal under the law. We can file complaints against our boss and even speak ill of our national leaders if we want to. So, when it comes to God, there is a part of us that pushes back against the idea of an untouchable God who is holy, other and above us.

But God inhabits a different category. He is Creator and we are creature. We need to use many words to describe the God we believe in. The seventh century monk and priest, John of Damascus, used these words to describe the God he worshiped and served.

We, therefore, both know and confess that God is without beginning, without end, eternal and everlasting, uncreated, unchangeable, invariable, simple, uncompound, incorporeal, invisible, impalpable, uncircumscribed, infinite, incognizable, indefinable, incomprehensible, good, just, maker of all things created, almighty, all-ruling, all-surveying, of all overseer, sovereign, judge; and that God is One, that is to say, one essence; and that He is known, and has His being in three subsistences, in Father, I say, and Son and Holy Spirit.

I don’t know about you, but I read something like this and think, “Well, that’s interesting.” Until we experience a thin place, these are just facts, words on a piece of paper. I can memorize them, but they don’t move me.

To be sure they are very important words. We would not know that this is true of God if God had not revealed these things to us through the Scripture. But knowing this truth is just the first step.

A.W. Tozer speaks of the importance of both revelation and illumination. The special revelation of the Bible tells us what God is like and the Spirit of God then illumines for us how that truth impacts our life and response.

Recognizing God for who He is begins in an interesting place—with a recognition of our dependency. We are so dependent on God that we need Him to tell us about His character and our response. But our response is not an academic principle to master; it is a reality to experience. When you meet God in a thin place, you won't be thinking through your response. It will just happen.

I ran into a thin place one day while on a silent retreat. Alone in a Catholic chapel, I slowly walked the stations of the cross before I sat in the front row to pray.

I don't know how it happened. I don't know when it happened. I only know that the veil between the physical and spiritual became very thin as I experienced the awesome God who had been present the entire time, but I had failed to see it. I had no choice but to fall to my knees and put my face on the cool marble floor as I wept and wept.

Time didn't exist as I knelt in His presence. Eventually I felt a gentle touch on my left shoulder and a soft question. "Are you okay?" To which I could only say, "He is so good. He is so good." But thin places are not just found on silent retreats or in special locations. God is everywhere all the time so He can be found anywhere and at any time.

I think King David found a thin place during a very difficult moment. An attempt to overthrow his kingdom had forced David to flee Jerusalem and head into the Judean wilderness. And there, in the midst of suffering from fatigue, loss, a son's betrayal and many other emotional and physical deprivations, David penned one his most beautiful songs, Psalm 63.

King David already knew about his dependency and the mighty character of God so in the midst of unfolding terror he practiced his response to the truths he already knew. His Psalm begins with an affirmation:

O God, you are my God.

We need to stop and park here for a season. David is addressing a personal being he calls God and then he proclaims that this God is his God.

Scripture taught David that the God he worshipped and served was infinite. In other words, God knows no limits. He has no bounds and no end.

You can measure my height, weight and limits. In fact, any created thing can be measured but no one can measure God. No one can fathom God. God cannot be put in a box and somehow mastered. All that God is, is without limit. His every aspect is infinite. This is beyond human understanding.

Only God is infinite, boundless and self-existent. Everything else is derivative and dependent. This means that God is not contained by time or space. Rather, time and space are contained by Him.

C.S. Lewis has helped me understand this.

Imagine a sheet of paper with a one-inch-long line on it. This line represents time and everything we know to be within time, including space and creation. The start of the line represents the beginning of time and the end represents the end of time. Now, imagine this sheet of paper extending out infinitely in all directions. The line still exists, but all around it—extending infinitely in all directions—is God who contains all space and time.

Scripture reveals that “In [God] we live and move and have our being” that Jesus created all things, holds all things together and sustains all creation by His powerful word.<sup>i</sup> If not for His work at creation and His ongoing work of sustaining that creation, we would not be here. God is independent; we are dependent. God is limitless; we are limited. God is source; we are derivative.

The first thing we need to grasp when approaching the Almighty God, our Creator in heaven, is our dependence on Him.

And in the midst of his great struggle and peril King David cried out, “O God, you are my God.” When we know even a little of God’s power and might it changes the way we approach every situation in life, even the most challenging ones.

When I think of God, I tend to use the hyphenated phrase, Holy – Love.

Holy. God is other than us in every way. Awesome, completely removed from anything profane, secular, or improper. Holiness is something that belongs to God alone. He is perfect, pure and without fault.

God’s unique holy nature separates Him from all humans and prevents humans from approaching God directly. God is the absolute ruler with full authority over the physical and spiritual realm.

We, on the other hand, are fallen spiritually, morally, mentally and physically and we live in a fallen world so holiness is impossible for us to fully grasp. This fallen reality is all we have ever known. Everything around us is impure and we see that as “normal.”

The Apostle Paul describes God with these words. He is “the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords.”<sup>16</sup> He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever! Amen.”<sup>ii</sup>

God is holy and our only response is to fall flat on our faces before Him in fearful reverence. Yet, at the same time, God is love. He is near, faithful, trustworthy. Just as his holiness is infinite, so too His love is infinite. Space and time do not contain these attributes; these attributes contain space and time.

While His holiness compels us to fall flat on our faces His love compels us to respond in love. When combined and held in a proper tension, the Holy – Love of God results in a response of Reverence – Love from us.

God revealed to us that He is infinite holiness and love, eternal, unchanging, sovereign, self-existent and worthy of our full devotion. At the same time God revealed that we are limited, fallen, dependent and yet loved. When it comes to God and humans, God occupies a totally different category, one that we cannot begin to properly fathom.<sup>iii</sup>

So, what happens when the Holy Spirit illumines the things that have been revealed? I think Psalm 63 provides an example.

<sup>1</sup> O God, you are my God,

This is the key question. Isn't it? Who is my God? Who is the one I worship and serve? Is it the God who has revealed His awesome character in the Scripture or is it a god of my own making? The level of our understanding and awareness leads us to how energetically we live out the next line.

O God, you are my God,  
earnestly I seek you;

The word earnestly here is connected to the dawn and so some translations say "early will I seek you." Whether early or earnestly the thought is the same—God is the reality through which everything else makes sense. For that reason, we choose to weave Him into our day. We choose to live *coram Deo*, living before the face of God.

To live *coram Deo* is to live one's entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God.

Our culture has no gravity for God. The environment we live in has reduced God to an equal or maybe the first among equals. But God is the Creator, the one who contains time and space and everything else. When we embrace this reality, it changes the way we see and live out our days.

O God, you are my God,  
earnestly I seek you;  
my soul thirsts for you,  
my body longs for you,  
in a dry and weary land  
where there is no water.

Can you see how David's difficult circumstances can become a thin place? He sees his surroundings and recognizes how these things reflect his heart's desire and reveal God's presence strengthening him even here. His mind takes him back to an earlier, better time.

- <sup>2</sup> I have seen you in the sanctuary  
and beheld your power and your glory.
- <sup>3</sup> Because your love is better than life,  
my lips will glorify you.
- <sup>4</sup> I will praise you as long as I live,  
and in your name I will lift up my hands.

We no longer need to visit a temple to worship God for when God's Spirit moved into us, we became the temple of God. We can behold God's power and glory at any time and in any place...if we take the time to look.

And did you catch that line in the middle of it all? "Because your love is better than life..." We will go to great lengths to preserve this life of ours. But how often do we consider God's love to be better than life? In what ways is it better? What would it mean to live as if it is better? This is worthy of some thought.

Having remembered God's faithfulness in the past and how God's love which he possesses is better than the life he may soon lose, David now looks to the future, to the day when God will rescue him, and how that certainty impacts even his most vulnerable times.

- <sup>5</sup> My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods;  
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.
- <sup>6</sup> On my bed I remember you;  
I think of you through the watches of the night.
- <sup>7</sup> Because you are my help,  
I sing in the shadow of your wings.
- <sup>8</sup> My soul clings to you;  
your right hand upholds me.

Do you hear David's recognition of God's greatness and his own dependency? O God, you are my God. My soul clings to you. Even in this terrible time I hold fast to you and know that Your right hand upholds me. You are great. I am small. And I can accept that.

Thin places are those places where we can catch a glimpse of God and say, "Oh, there you are!" How might we find a thin place that helps us experience God's greatness and our dependency?

God reveals these things to us in His word and the Holy Spirit illumines what they mean and how they relate to us. So it makes sense to linger in God's word as we listen to the Spirit.

The prayer practice I want to emphasize this week is praying scripture and while there are countless Bible passages we can use, the one I want to focus on is Psalm 63.

I encourage you to use this psalm in prayer this week. Go through it slowly, phrase by phrase. As you pray each phrase to God be open to how the Spirit will speak to you. You don't need to pray the entire psalm every day, though you might. The point is not to get through the word but to let the word get through to you.

Is the God of the Bible your God? Ask Him to reveal the areas where you may have added things that are not of Him or forgotten things that are. Why would you earnestly seek Him or ask Him to show you why you don't.

With Jerusalem under enemy control and his life hanging in the balance, David said God's love is better than the life he was trying to preserve. Ask God to help you see why David could say that, how that might be true for you and what kind of difference that could make.

Work your way through this Psalm line by line, lingering where the Spirit leads you to linger. If you hear condemnation or feel shame, fear or guilt, realize that this is not from God. God will speak hope and promise to you. If you come away with the conclusion of "I should" or "I must" then this too, is a little suspicious because the end result is not about what we do but what God has done and is doing.

If these thoughts or feelings come your way then treat it as a good thing because they point you to a barrier that is keeping you from experiencing the fullness of God's grace. At some point it would be good to talk to a trusted friend or spiritual director to prayerfully consider the source of your thoughts and emotions and what you may need to release in order to hear God more clearly.

Go ahead and give this a try if not daily then at least three times this week. Then, as you go throughout the day, remember what God had you pause on and be ready for Him to bring it up again. Over time He will help you see it from various angles as He helps you engage this more fully in your life.

If you are going through a difficult time go ahead and add the concluding verses of this Psalm to your prayer. As you do, recognize that this is not about swords and jackals, it is about the confidence that God will come to your aid.

And who knows, as we linger in His word and listen to His Spirit, we may just find the veil between us and God becoming a little thinner as we smile and think, "There you are!"

### **Prayer**

O God, you are our God. Infinite. Holy. Eternal. Self-Existent. Self-sufficient, omniscient, omnipotent, sovereign and unchanging. Almighty God of heaven our maker. You are our God. We are your dependent people. Help us see you for who you are and learn to live before your face, under your great name and loving authority, every moment of every day.

---

<sup>i</sup> Acts 17:28; Col 1:17; Heb 1:3

<sup>ii</sup> 1 Timothy 6:15-16

<sup>iii</sup> Richard Baxter wrote, From this greatness and immensity of God also your soul must reverently stay all its busy, bold inquiries, and know that God is to us, and to every creature, incomprehensible. If you could fathom or measure him, and know his greatness by a comprehensive knowledge, he were not God. A creature can comprehend nothing but a creature. You may know God, but not comprehend him; as your foot treads on the earth, but does not cover all the earth. The sea is not the sea, if you can hold it in a spoon.