

The Nearness of God

1. Thin Places

Places where we are "drawn out into that vast sea of divine reality" - Robert Royal

Idea from British Isles - absorbed into early Christian thought in Ireland

Where heaven and earth are very close to one another

2. Consider Mark 1 as Jesus speaking of Thin Places

"The Kingdom of God has drawn near"

Through Jesus, we are able to be aware of the presence of God, of the supernatural

Develop an awareness of Thin Places

Requires

Repentance

Listening

Trust

3. Jonah

Kingdom of God has also come near for Ninevah

Ninevah was the capital of the Assyrian Empire

Jonah was called to prophecy to the greatest enemy of the Jews at the time

This is why he has issues going there

To Tarshish

In the belly of a large fish

All it takes is 5 words in Hebrew to convert the entire city - 120,000 people and the animals

And then Jonah throws a temper tantrum

4. Thin Places around us

Jonah has forgotten compassion

"You care more for a little plant than you do for all those people and even the animals" Jon 4

He has also forgotten something else

That God is next to him throughout his entire experience

from the beginning of the story of Jonah to the end, God never leaves his side.

Thin Places are often associated with a place, a location.

Think of Mt. Sinai - thin place between God and Moses

Think of the Tent of Meeting - thin place between God and leaders of Israel

Think of the Temple of Israel - thin place between God and the priests of Israel

In Jesus, though, as we heard last week, WE are the temple of the Holy Spirit

Like Jonah, God's choosing of us makes US a thin place between God and the world

5. Practical aspects of Thin Places

St. Patrick

In his time as Missionary to Ireland, he created 700 churches and ordained 1000 priests

Ireland has the honor of being one of the only places where no blood was shed when Christianity arrived on her shores

Why?

Because St. Patrick knew that Ireland was filled with Thin Places - we know about them because Patrick told us about them

Because Patrick knew that wherever Christ was present, the Kingdom of God has drawn near

He taught the new converts to develop a sensitivity to Thin Places by

Repenting

Of those things which separate us from God and others

Listening

to the culture, the people and the concerns of the times

image-based culture, not word-based

Trusting God

approaching culture and others with confidence that God will lead us and them closer to him

not fearing the culture which surrounds us

And what Jonah needed to learn - Compassion

sometimes requires seeing the best and most possible in others rather than what is wrong and worst