

## Heart for the Poor Finding God in the Thin Places

Our devotion this morning at TEAR Fund was led by Andrew Dallaston on Celtic Christianity. One of the mysterious concepts they embrace is that of meeting God in the “Thin Places”, by the sea, at the edge of the forest, on a mountain top. You know the feeling don’t you. Sometimes God seems so close you could reach out and touch him, and sometimes you can go back to that place and sense the same thing. I started thinking if God was somehow a little closer in the “thin places”, are there “thick places” where he might be harder to find? What might they look like? Could I suggest that when we are in the midst of busyness we can feel distant from God? Could I go one step further and suggest that the worry and time we spend on acquiring and managing our possessions might also create a thick place between us and God?

Now you may not agree, and it is unfair, because this is not talkback radio. Well, I would be interested in your comments on this, if you go to [www.doingfreedom.wordpress.com](http://www.doingfreedom.wordpress.com) you will find the notes from this talk and you can comment. Remember the story of the rich young man who when asking Jesus how he should get to heaven was told to sell all his possessions. Does this make the poor closer to God than we are because they don’t have possessions? I can hear you saying “Richard has really stepped over the mark now”. I am not going to press this only to say how much of our time do we spend working to pay off mortgages and other forms of debt for things we own? How much time do we spend getting them serviced, planning to replace them etc. etc? Now I can hear those of you who were listening last week saying “But last week you were talking about how great washing machines are at saving us time and letting us be productive in other ways”! You are right, I am contradicting myself here.

Let’s return to Celtic Christianity, and maybe we can find some answers. Those practicing Celtic Christianity had five values at the core of their beliefs; Simplicity, Inclusiveness, Community, Beauty and Learning. What can we learn from these things today? First on the list was simplicity. Having lots of stuff is not simple is it? Inclusiveness kind of goes with Community doesn’t it. Paul when talking in Acts 4:32 speaks of the believers sharing everything they had. Is that what we should be doing with our stuff? The last two values are beauty and learning, I love these. Appreciating God’s good creation and being lifelong learners can only enrich our existence.

So where are we going with this? We began by looking at those “thin places” where God seems to be easier to find, then moved on to “thick places” where he seems distant. I suggested that those thick places might be found in times of busyness and worry about possessions. We heard that Jesus suggested the rich young man sell his possession and give the money to the poor, and Paul encouraged the believers at the time to share their possessions. This could be taken a step further in 1John 3:17 we read “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in him?” Then finally we heard how Celtic Christians valued along with other things a simple lifestyle. This all challenges me to question just what impact do my “things” have on my ability to connect with God. I don’t have a quick answer to that, maybe you do. Go to [doingfreedom.wordpress.com](http://doingfreedom.wordpress.com) and let me know your thoughts.

Prayer: Father God we want to be close to you, to encounter you, to dwell in your presence, shelter under your arm. Inspire within us ways we can find those thin places where you can be found, help us to be aware of those things we create that build walls between us and your glory. Help us to be a catalyst in the life of others that they too might come face to face with your majesty.  
Amen

Richard Barter