

*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is
Good, his love endures forever
Psalm 107:1 NIV*

*Praise the Lord for He is good
For His Mercies ever sure
From eternity have stood
From eternity endure
Let His ransomed people raise
Songs to their Redeemer's praise
From Psalm 107, The Psalter, 1912*

When we identify ourselves as people of faith, sometimes we do it because that's the way it's been in our family, we like the routine, it provides an opportunity to serve others, we enjoy the fellowship with the familiar folks we know, or other valid reasons. What may get lost in those reasons is our "spirituality", our connection with God's presence in our lives. We might call these reasons or rationales a "two dimensional" approach to individual and communal expressions of faith.

Too often our lives both as individuals and communities of faith have relied on the "two dimensional approach". For a long time that approach seemed to have served us well, and in many ways still does. Somehow though, the "two dimensional approach" to faith seemed to work better in the stable predictable "two dimensional" patterns of society in which we lived.

Now, however, all of that perceived "stability" is "out the window" in our society. In response the "two dimensional" approach in our faith journeys and in our faith communities may still work. But for others, especially for the generation coming up, stability may not be the most needed piece in being a person of faith in this world. For others the two dimensional approach has either failed them or left them feeling "flat" spiritually in coping with a less stable world.

The third dimension which is needed is the sense of God's presence in our lives, mediated by the Holy Spirit. How do we get it? How can it be made manifest in our midst? It comes from remembering, meditating, or cultivating God's loving mercy in our lives, as the verse in Psalm 107 and in the "Psalter" arrangement of that verse cited at the beginning.

This morning when I was in the sanctuary of our church, I picked up an old hymnal from other tradition I was a part of. I went to the organ and started playing some of the familiar hymns I knew. Suddenly I started remembering God's mercies to me in the past, not deserving, and I felt a deep closeness to God's presence. It was a moment, as the credit card company says, that was "priceless"; the "third dimension".

May God help us, by the Holy Spirit, to direct us to that place of the sense of God's loving mercy in our lives. There is a hymn that expresses it best, by Joseph Addison written in 1712:

*"When all thy mercies my God, My rising soul surveys
Transported with the view, I'm lost, In wonder, love, and praise"*

Pr. John Van Haneghan