

Anna Burnham:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning. Good morning.

Anna Burnham:

Welcome to Morning Prayers at Memorial Church, our first back in Appleton in about two years, I think. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the Black Appleton Psalter book, Psalm 137 found on page 69, please remain masked and stand as you are able to read responsibly by the whole verse.

Anna Burnham:

"By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remember Zion."

Congregation:

"On the willows, there we hung up our lyres."

Anna Burnham:

"For there, our captors required of us songs and our tormentors, mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.'"

Congregation:

"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?"

Anna Burnham:

"If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither."

Congregation:

"Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you. If I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy!"

Anna Burnham:

"Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites, the day of Jerusalem, how they said, 'Raze it, raze it, down to its foundations!'"

Congregation:

"O daughter of Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall he be who requites you with what you have done to us."

Choir:

(singing).

Frank Barrett:

A reading from the first Book of Kings 19, "Then Elijah said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord and behold the Lord pass by.' And a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks into pieces before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a still small voice. So, it was when Elijah heard it that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him and said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'"

The contrast between the boisterous noises, the wind that tore the mountain apart, the earthquake on one hand and on the other hand, this slight, almost imperceptible murmur that is the voice of the Lord. I wonder, is that what God's voice sounds like?

A personal story. After the death of my mother, as often happens, when a parent dies, we had some awful sibling conflict and my brother became estranged from us. The relationship became increasingly hostile and destructive. He said hateful things. And I eventually resigned myself, sadly, that the relationship is irreparable. I had to let him go and get on with my life. And we stopped all contact.

Three years later, I decided to walk the Camino De Santiago, a 500 mile pilgrimage across the North of Spain. It's a pilgrimage that began in the middle ages, half a million people do it each year. You spend between six and eight hours each day walking, most of it in silence. The point of the Camino is meditative, to pay attention to what you pay attention to. To notice the beauty around you and what's happening inside of you.

I started off my first day optimistic, but surprisingly began to think about my brother, Danny. I began to feel this anger and the resentment that I could not get rid of, where is this coming from, suddenly? I began pondering ways to retaliate against him. I tried to let it go, but the resentment and vengeance kept coming up. On the sixth day, I received a text from my spiritual director who asked, "How's the Camino going?" And I said, "Awful. I hate it. I can't stop thinking about my brother Danny and how angry I am. I'm thinking of coming home." He answered, "That's what the Camino wants you to look at."

And then, surprisingly something shifted. The next day, my mind was freer. I was able to pay attention to the landscape. I had warm interactions and created a few friendships, some of which persist to this day. Suddenly the Camino became magical. It is a place of altruism and love. People spontaneously offer friendship and support along the way and free glasses of lemonade when it's 95 degrees. I've begun to feel this sense of warm, acceptance and gratitude.

This went on until the end, three weeks later, it was the second to last day. I wanted to meet up with friends, to walk into Santiago together. I woke up early on Saturday morning for the first time in 34 days, I didn't feel well. It was distressing, because I had 18 miles to cover. I struggled for a few miles and then I stopped at a cafe. I put my head on a table and dozed off for about 25 minutes. But I had to get going. I lifted my 23-pound pack and then went to get my walking poles, but they weren't there. I knew where I

set them down. I looked all around and couldn't find my poles. And suddenly, it hit me, someone stole my poles while I was asleep.

I was so disheartened and the spirit of altruism was shattered. With a 23-pound pack, walking through hills, the poles were essential. My face hardened and a switch went off in me and I said to myself, "I'm getting those poles back." So, I took off like a bat out of hell down the path. And every person I saw, I stared at with suspicion wondering, "Are those my poles?" I even thought a farmer leaning on something in his field and I was suspicious it was my poles. It was a shovel.

Finally, I had to stop and resign myself that they were gone. Then suddenly I noticed the man ahead of me who was walking, had a walking stick in his backpack, but also had poles. Why would he need a walking stick and a set of poles? So, I ran up and caught up to him. "Nice poles." I said. "Thank you." He said. "Where'd you get them?" "From a friend." I walked a few feet in front of him, turned around and stopped him and said, "Those are my poles." He said, "Oh, okay. Bon Camino," which means good travel, and handed them back to me and walked on.

My heart started to pound, the adrenaline was pumping. I couldn't believe I had my poles back. And I actually kissed them. And I realized I'm not done with this guy yet. So, I ran up to him and walked alongside him. I said, "You shouldn't steal people's stuff." "I didn't mean to." He said, "Well, they didn't leap them to your hands." I said, "The owner said I could have of them." I said, "She doesn't speak English. Don't add a lie to thievery."

And I have to tell you, I've never felt so powerful in my life. My heart was pumping. How seldom in my life I have felt so unconditionally right with no ambivalence. It was an amazing feeling of righteousness and power. And then, suddenly as I was walking, a still small voice in my head said, "That's how your brother Danny feels." Suddenly, my whole being collapsed, that still small voice disrupted my celebration of righteousness. It took the winds out of my sails. The righteousness was so compelling I thought, "No wonder, that's the way Danny lives."

I can only tell you that still small voice was not mine. The last thing I would've chosen was empathy for Danny. But since then, things changed. I've reached out to him and we have begun ever so slowly to heal our relationship. So, let us think about that still small voice, and please join me in prayer.

Lord, help us to ponder what it takes for us to hear that still small voice. And thank you for giving us a wonderful model in the life of the late Dr. Paul Farmer, who heard that still small voice, it was inspired to devote his life to helping the world's poorest poor. Remind us that your voice won't be loud like an earthquake or a huge fire or a destructive wind, or certainly won't be like missiles, bombs, and explosions that the Ukrainians are hearing right at this very moment.

We know, Father, that your voice is not in those explosions. We know that those Russian soldiers, in their hearts, do not want to kill. Please, help them to hear your murmurs. More importantly, please help Ukrainians to hear your still small voice of hope. Let's pray today in our lives that we can create in our space to hear your murmurs. Help us to be open to hearing you today.

Anna Burnham:

Please stand as you are able. And together, let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught us saying, Our Father.

Congregation:

Our father.

Anna Burnham:

Who art in heaven.

Congregation:

Who art in heaven.

Anna Burnham:

Hallowed be thy name.

Congregation:

Hallowed be thy name.

Anna Burnham:

Thy kingdom come.

Congregation:

Thy kingdom come.

Anna Burnham:

Thy will be done-

Congregation:

Thy will be done-

Anna Burnham:

... on earth as it is in heaven.

Congregation:

... on earth as it is in heaven.

Anna Burnham:

Give us this day our daily bread.

Congregation:

Give us this day our daily bread.

Anna Burnham:

And forgive us our trespasses-

Congregation:

And forgive us our trespasses-

Anna Burnham:

... as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Congregation:

... as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Anna Burnham:

And lead us not into temptation.

Congregation:

And lead us not into temptation.

Anna Burnham:

But deliver us from evil.

Congregation:

But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Anna Burnham:

Amen. Together, let us sing to him, Let the Whole Creation Cry, number three, found in your Crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation:

(singing).

Anna Burnham:

Go forth into the world in peace, be of good courage and may the love of God draw us closer to God and to each other today and every day. And together, let us say, amen.

Congregation:

Amen.