

Elizabeth Propst:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Elizabeth Propst:

Welcome to Morning Prayers here in the Appleton Chapel for the fifth day of our senior class talks. We are grateful to have Larry Jia of Mather House joining us. Larry has been a member of this church community during his time at Harvard, a member of our student advisory board. So we are very, very bummed that he is leaving, but very, very excited to have him with us this morning. Please rise in body or in spirit for our responsive song, which is Number 93 in your black Psalter. "The Lord is King. He is robed in grandeur. The Lord is robed. He is girded with strength."

Congregation:

The world's stands firm. It cannot be shaken."

Elizabeth Propst:

"The throne stands firm from of old, from eternity You have existed."

Congregation:

"The ocean sounds, O Lord, the ocean sounds its thunder, the ocean sounds its pounding."

Elizabeth Propst:

"Above the thunder of the mighty waters, more majestic than the breakers of the sea is the Lord, majestic on high."

Congregation:

"Your decrees are indeed enduring; holiness benefits Your house, O Lord, for all times."

Choir:

(Singing)

Larry Jia:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Larry Jia:

So I was asked to do an inspired text. For the last five years I've been journaling nearly every day, filling about 600 pages with my thoughts. Most of it foolish, some of it true. So I'm actually going to excuse myself first by breaking tradition this morning by quoting myself from nearly three years ago. It's

something I'd written in one of these journal entries. "I've sailed every ocean and stepped on every shore, swam the deepest oceans and trekked the highest moors. My eyes are weary and my boots are frayed. My heart hangs heavy and cries out to set. No matter the waters I sail or the forests I touch, the mountains I scale or the adventures I brush, the heights I scale never seem as high nor the pitch of laughter I laugh that truly underlies. Only then my thinking heart reluctantly concludes the following simple lesson that previously so eludes, that the only greater adventure which can be penned is sharing that adventure with a friend."

I first want to thank Memorial Church for having me and especially to Reverend Matt Potts for helping me think about the big questions that seem silly but aren't. To Maha, Amala, Luke and Mather House, again, thank you for inviting me, and I hope I'll make you proud. When I took the red line to Cambridge for the first time, having never been north of New York before, I so clearly remember thinking, "I've known and loved my friends from home since we met in kindergarten. How could I possibly find that here?" But with the help of table A-12 in Annenberg, Candidate B, and I'll admit, not completely a wardrobe that's furnished by my mom, I did, and oh, how lucky I've been. Since those early days, I've spent a great deal of time adventuring with those friends in far away and strange places. On sand dunes and on volcanoes and blizzards and on beaches, we don't often say, "I love you," but at this point in my life I can translate it well enough. That's what I heard when they drove hours to pick me up from the airport.

That's what I heard when they cooked me good food on the camping stove. That's even what I heard when they told me to slow down, pick my head up from the books and finally emerge from Lamont Basement. But frankly, it's easy to be friends when times are good. It's when the unthinkable happens, when things fall apart and the glass shatters that those bonds are truly tested. It's hard to hold a friend as they cry, to encourage a friend whose world has turned against them, to support a friend at personal risk or to forgive a friend who has hurt you. No doubt, college, COVID and whatever angst laid at the tail end of puberty has tested us profoundly, but it's in these very moments that true friendship is forged. In fact, I challenge you to think why this remarkable selflessness occurs in the first place. It shouldn't. It's not like we owe our friends any duty like I do my mom by virtue of being her son or that I owe my sister by virtue of being her brother, or even I owe my dog by virtue of being her caretaker.

There are very few practical or inborn considerations that really hold friendships together. In other words, it's easy to give up on friends, but we simply choose not to. It's for this reason that friendship is perhaps the purest form of relationship. It's for this reason more than the raucous laughter or easy joke that makes leaving Harvard so difficult. It's for this reason, I think more than any other, that even the tough memories made in this place will always be fond. In a few short weeks, my friends will graduate together and disperse to far and distant corners. Though I will miss them dearly, I think it's the act of remembering the simple pleasures like watching one cloud split into many and happily float off to the horizon that truly gives life its fine texture and color and shape. Wherever I've gone, I have felt firmly grounded and never lost because of my friends, and wherever they go. I hope my friends feel the same way. For this I'm grateful. For this I pray.

Elizabeth Propst:

Will you pray with me? Holy One, we give You thanks for mixed blessings, for spring weather and flowers and the pollen that accompanies them, for good friends, and it's hard times for seniors beloved to this community setting out into the world. April showers, May flowers, you know the drill. Be with us amidst our joy and our sorrow, we give You thanks for all of it. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Elizabeth Propst:

Please rise in body or in spirit for the Lord's Prayer. Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from glory, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen. Please join in our closing hymn Number 333 in your crimson hymnal.

Choir:

(Singing)

Elizabeth Propst:

Two quick announcements before we depart. First, when you were walking in, you might've noticed that the handrails on the outer steps have been taken off for our upcoming choir concert. So if you normally like to have the handrails, I might advise you to take the right side entrance and the ramp instead. Secondly, if you've come to morning prayers or to Sunday worship at this church, you have probably seen or at least heard Ed Jones, our choir master, also our university organist and our music director. This year is Ed's 20th year at the Memorial Church.

So at Coffee Hour this Sunday, we're going to have a celebration for him, a couple of people offering words on his long and harmonic service to this congregation. So we'd love to have you join us either for Sunday service and then for Coffee Hour. If you just want to pop over around 12:15-ish, we'll be in full swing. Hope to see you there. As you depart into this day, remember that Christ has no hands in this world but yours, no voice but yours. May our hands and our voices do the work of justice and of love today and always, amen.

Congregation:

Amen.