

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Welcome to our daily service of Morning Prayers. We're so grateful to have you this morning. We're also grateful for our speaker today. AmarAtma is our speaker today. He is a grief and letting go coach. Thank you for being here with us. All who are able, please rise in body and spirit as we will read Psalm 71 found in your black psalter.

"In thee, oh Lord, do I put my trust. Let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape. Incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, where unto I may continually resort. Thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, oh my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. For thou art my hope, oh Lord God. Thou art my trust from my youth. I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honor all the day. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee and my soul, which thou has redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long, for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt."

You may be seated.

(singing)

AmarAtma Khalsa:

To Reverend Calvin, to the Harvard Memorial Church and to fellow congregants, an important message calls my heart to share today. Regardless of your social status in this world, your earning power, where you come from, your nationality, your caste, creed, or skin color, we will all face a guarantee of this life: grief and loss. I believe, however, we are missing the mark for how we grieve in our modern world. The push through, get over it, accept it at all cost, letting go mentality is plaguing our world with an emotional burden of immense weight. Instead, I invite another process, letting your grief breathe instead of treating grief and the emotional pain that comes with it as an enemy that must be conquered only to create a profound fragmentation and division within our own being. That may well just be why it is that we have such a divided and polarized world. I invite us to reframe grief as a story of love.

Grief stuck me at a young age. Growing up in a multi-generational household, my grandfather was a steadfast ever-present pillar of my life. Growing up as a first-generation Sikh Indian American had its troubles from bullying to name-calling and being treated as the other. And with my parents who sought out the American dream, it required them to work full time to make ends meet. My grandfather's presence was paramount to a world in which I felt so alone. But when he died, I didn't quite appreciate the power of his loss and years of pain ensued for me. It wasn't until years later after a decade of existential pain and dark, dark nights of my soul, that grief was a word that described what I was feeling and a huge relief came over me. I had a name for my pain.

When grief's blow strikes your heart, that sunken feeling that creates a great void of hollowness within, we are brought to our knees and amidst a chaos of overwhelming uncertainty, even the most spirited among us may be humbled by its powers. Yet I challenge the way we grieve in our modern world, where

we serve platitudes and one-liners and quick fixes, like a bumper sticker we slap onto those suffering, only to mask our overwhelming discomfort with their pain, hoping that if we only had the right thing to say, we could alleviate their suffering. Instead, however, we pour salt on the wound, offer three days of bereavement and ask them to take up their post, maintain their functionality as if we are robots, machines, or some AI algorithm. Yet what strikes me most is its powerlessness of our grieving process. How is it that we have a universal problem without universal solutions?

Young enough, I ventured through my education as a means of my own personal healing through board certifications in Chinese medicine, acupuncture, and chaplaincy, a 10-year meditative and contemplative ministry apprenticeship in my faith as a Sikh. I merged ministry and medicine, learning about grief, holding the hands with the dying, hearing the stories of regret and disappointment, wailing with mothers who lost their children, grieving with spouses who lost their partners, and serving with a medical staff ill-equipped to emotionally and spiritually process life, death, grief and loss, and as it were, vicariously carrying the trauma also unsaid and unprocessed.

What I learned over the years of personal and professional growth is that grieving is a life skill we have never been taught. Grief is not an enemy that seeks to shackle our hearts and sentence us to a lifetime in imprisonment. Grief seeks not to be the boogeyman that haunts our waking life. No. As Jamie Anderson tells us, grief is love that has nowhere to go. We are plagued by an all true, powerful, unspoken epidemic in our culture and emotion phobia. This mighty intellect that we have seeks to control and make sense, rationalize and analyze, but do anything but to feel.

Instead, I invite us and those listening to recognize grief is a self-actualizing process. It teaches us what we love, how we love, and what is most important in our life. It's an invitation to enter a space within to reclaim the power of the heart. Yes, the heart can hold what the mind can't understand. It can hold the emotional abstractions and paradoxes. The heart can hold multiple things true at the same time. Yes, I seek a vision for a more grief-informed world where we move closer to grief, allow it to breathe, give it space to teach us about love.

Instead of pushing to let go of our grief, let us let go of our emotional hyper-comfortability. Let us let go of judgment and stigma and shame and explore with greater depth of our humanness. Not just to feel better, but to learn how to feel itself. I seek a grief-informed vision where love leads towards a more intentional and attention-filled experience that alleviates our loneliness. Where emotions are recognized as spiritual building blocks and not a liability, we strive to rid as an evolutionary byproduct. Yes, I believe world peace comes through inner peace, where we actively engage with our grief and are empowered through compassionate resources that bring us closer together as grief seeks to bring us closer to love, thus closer to God and closer to ourselves.

I invite you today to love deeper, love more kindly, love more wholeheartedly, love with great awkwardness and sincere genuineness, and release the pretense, and love with great love. Bring your grief to the forefront, let love flow. And as a venture to create a more grief-informed world, my grandfather continues to teach me, love is complex. It's full, dynamic and messy, and so thus our grief is complex. It is also full, dynamic and messy. It takes a whole heart to love and it takes a whole heart to grieve, and it is in this whole heart of living that we actualize greater. Thank you.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

All who are able, please rise in body and spirit for prayer. Let us pray.

Oh, God of love. We ask now that we may have a grief-informed vision, that we may embrace it and learn to sit with the power of love. We ask now that you be with us now and forever more. Amen.

Now, let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples saying:

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 evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Now, let us sing together, Hymn number 189 found in your hymnal, entitled, This is Our Father's World.

(singing)

Knowing that this is our mother's world, we know that our mother is ever present, so let our grief breathe. Now, as you leave this place, but never away from God's presence, as you leave this gathering, but never away from God's love, may the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit, rest, rule, and abide now, henceforth now and forevermore. Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thanks be to God.