

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Welcome to our daily worship of morning prayers here in Appleton Chapel. Our speaker for this morning is Amy Sexauer, seminarian here in the Memorial Church. All who are able, please rise for our responsive reading found in your black Psalter. We will be reading Psalm 61.

Hear my cry, O God.

Attend unto my prayer.

Congregation:

From the ends of the earth I cry unto Thee.

When my heart is overwhelmed.

Lead me to the rock as higher than I.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

For Thou hast been a shelter for me.

And a strong tower from the enemy.

Congregation:

I will abide in Your tabernacle will forever.

I will trust in the fullness of Thy wings.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

For Thou, O God, hast heard my vows.

Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear Thy name.

Congregation:

Thou will prolong the king's life.

And his years as many generations.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

He shall abide before God forever.

Oh, prepare mercy and truth which may preserve him.

Congregation:

So will I sing praise to Thy name forever.

That I may daily perform my vows.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

You may be seated.

MUSIC:

[foreign language 00:03:37]

Amy Sexauer:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Amy Sexauer:

Last week, Tuesday, September 3rd was for many of us, the first day of school. It was also my daughter's day of first grade. We woke up early. I made a nice big breakfast of pancakes. We took our first day of school pictures and were able to leisurely walk to school. In other words, I, as a parent, crushed it. Then the second day of school, on Wednesday, my daughter woke up and decided she hated all of her clothes. Nothing was clean enough, nothing fit right. She didn't feel beautiful. My six-year-old changed clothes multiple times with escalating levels of distress which culminated in a good old-fashioned meltdown. Needless to say, I did not crush it that day.

I had my own expectations for how the week was going to go. I had put a lot of thought into the classes I would take this semester, and I was ready to get started. I was organized. I had a plan. I was ready. Even though I knew she was going to be overtired and overwhelmed from the change from our summer routine, I was not prepared for her meltdown. I had not built enough time into our morning routine for this new aspect of her personality to emerge and so naturally I tried to solve the problem by bulldozing through her feelings and rushing us out the door.

After a little bit of parent guilt and feeling sorry for myself, I tried to come up with a plan or strategy for how to do better next time. I could wake up a little earlier. We could try to lay out her outfits the night before. I could ask other parents for their experiences or advice on how they worked through this phase with their kids. I fell back on the tools that usually get me through challenges. Then a couple of days later, my daughter got sick and she had to stay home from school which, by the way, is totally normal. This is not the first nor will it be the last time that she gets sick and has to stay home from school.

Even though I did my best to respond with tenderness, I was disappointed with all the things I needed to do that day that got canceled, things I felt I really needed to do. I started to feel stressed out about whether I could balance being a parent and a student. And my daughter, wonderful little human being that she is, perceiving my stress apologized to me for being sick. I like to say that my daughter is one of my greatest teachers, and she's definitely a mirror. When she apologized to me, it stopped me in my tracks. I thought of all the times that I had pushed through being sick or bulldozed over my own feelings because they were inconvenient. Because I didn't have time for them. I want to do better by her.

I don't think I'm alone in this. I see a similar anxiety amongst my peers and my classmates who came to this prestigious institution because we care, because we want to contribute to making the world a better place, because we are not afraid to confront the world's challenges. But sometimes that means it feels like all of the world's problems are on our shoulders and there is no time for us, for us to be poet and activist. June Jordan wrote that, "To rescue our children, we will have to let them save us from the power we embody. We will have to trust the very difference that they forever personify."

This week, my daughter showed me the flaws in my own power. She showed me that the skills I have developed in our high-stakes world are not the same skills needed to be in relationship with one another. It is not lost on me that parenting might be the most high-stakes relationship I have in my life, and yet it demands from me things counterintuitive to what are stressful world demands: To slow down; to know I am not in control; planning and organizing are important but they won't save you from sick days and traffic; and, the reality that our emotions need space to breathe that will not always fit into your schedule.

My daughter doesn't care about my plans. She doesn't care about the effort I put into parenting. She just wants me, my presence and my kindness. She wants what so many of us want but have lost the ability to ask for. Permission to take up space, permission to feel, to ask for someone to just be present with us, present and real and kind.

I know around campus people are doing amazing things. I know it is hard and stressful and that we all have to show up to work or class on time. Truly, I'm humbled to be here every day, but I would ask in the midst of all the great things we are doing that we don't forget the being, that we not forget to be in relationship with each other. My daughter fills my life with chaos, unpredictability, and an uncomfortable amount of vulnerability, but she also fills my life with love, with purpose, with joy, and a good amount of silliness and laughter. And I think we could all use more of that.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

All who are able, please rise for prayer. Let us pray.

Loving God, You call us to be. Amid the stress of life, amid chaos, may we take up space and sit with our emotions. May we take the time to be. Loving God, You give us permission to be in relationship with our neighbor and to walk in our hearts. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

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

MUSIC:

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 others who trespassed against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Now let us sing together hymn number 288, Forgive Our Sins As We forgive.

MUSIC:

Forgive our sins as we forgive.

You taught us, Lord, to pray.

But you alone can grant us grace.

To live the words we say.

How can your pardon reach and bless.
The unforgiving heart.
That broods on wrongs and will not let.
Old bitterness depart.
In blazing light your cross reveals.
The truth we dimly knew.
How small the debts men owe to us.
How great our debt to You.
Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls.
And bid resentment cease.
Then, reconciled to God and man.
Our lives will spread Your peace.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

As we leave this place, but never away from God's presence, may you have permission to sit, grieve, and feel. Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thank you, God.