

Harriett Lindeman:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

Harriett Lindeman:

And welcome to Morning Prayers here at Appleton Chapel. Our speaker this morning will be Austin Bogues, Master of Religion and Public Life class of '23, Assistant Washington Editor of USA Today, and a community member here at Morning Prayers. Welcome, Austin. Please rise in body or in spirit for a responsive reading of Psalm 89, found in your black Appleton psalter. I will sing of your steadfast love, oh Lord, forever. With my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

Audience:

I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

Harriett Lindeman:

You said I have made a covenant with my chosen one. I have sworn to my servant, David.

Audience:

I will establish your descendants forever and build your throne for all generations.

Harriett Lindeman:

Happy are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, oh Lord, in the light of your countenance.

Audience:

They exult in your name all day long [inaudible 00:03:28] your righteousness.

Harriett Lindeman:

For you are the glory of their strength. By your favor, our horn is exalted.

Audience:

For our shield belongs to the Lord, our king to the Holy One of Israel.

Speaker 4:

(Singing).

Austin Bogues:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

Austin Bogues:

A reading from Psalm 23. "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Here ends the lesson.

The scripture here is one of the most well-known in the Bible, but this Psalm of David is one of my favorites because it strikes me as especially authentic. David becomes a lot of things. He's a war hero who takes down a giant with no more than a smooth stone and a sling. He's a poet. He plays the harp. He sings and dances. He becomes the ruler of a kingdom divided with political intrigue and violent conflict. He gets embroiled in scandal and commits grievous sins. In many cases, perhaps today, we would most recognize a character like a David in a celebrity or a politician. He has charisma and at times bombast, and he has deep flaws.

In a cinematic portrayal of David starring the actor Gregory Peck, David is asked if Goliath was as big as they say he was. David quips that he admits when he tells a story, he grows a little bigger every year. But when we're first introduced to David in scripture, the future king is something more of an afterthought. The Prophet Samuel arrives at his father Jesse's house looking for a king at the direction of the Lord. He goes and surveys seven of Jesse's sons, but none of them emerges as the one Samuel is to anoint. David at this time is outside tending to a flock of sheep.

It's this venue David uses in the 23rd Psalm to describe his relationship with God, who he describes as a watchful shepherd whose protection he stands under. Despite all of his power, his heroic narrative, his character drama, the adventure he happens upon, David still views the world and the cosmos as a pasture where God could lead him much as a shepherd tends to his flock. In this case, there's a striking vulnerability in David's approach. He sees himself in this role not as the shepherd, but as the sheep. Someone in need of protection and guidance, someone who can follow meekly.

My mentor and friend and spiritual advisor, Father Michael Patella, told me just the other day that Psalm 23 is one that we must apply for our everyday living, for our daily walk with God. By Father Patella's telling, he said, "If we're not self-deprecating with God, we're not being honest, nor do we have a real and intimate relationship with him." The feeling I want to remember when I think of God is not the times I've been exalted or glorified, but the moments when I've been humbled or vulnerable or in need of someone to protect me. It's the moments where I've stumbled or fallen short of my ideals. The times I've gone unnoticed or felt alone.

In these moments, I want to be able to see as clearly as David that I need someone to lead me through the pastures of this life. Most of all, I want to remember that no matter who or what I become, I need God as much in my hills and mountains as I do in my valleys. For those of you all who are able, would you rise in body or spirit for the Lord's Prayer? Our Father who are 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, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Audience:

Our Father who are 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, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Harriett Lindeman:

And now let us sing the hymn, Lead Us Heavenly Father, Lead Us, number 317.

Speaker 4:

(Singing).

Harriett Lindeman:

As we leave this place, the peace of God be in your heart, the love of God be in your hands, the joy of God be in your soul. Go in peace. Amen.

Audience:

Amen.