

Congregation:

[inaudible 00:00:02].

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Welcome to the Appleton Chapel here in our Memorial Church for this daily service of Morning Prayers. Our speaker this morning is Congressman Seth Moulton, who represents Massachusetts 6th District in Congress. I invite you, please, to rise and join in saying our responsorial psalm, which is number 115 in your Black Psalter. "Not to us, O God, not to us, but to your name give glory, because of your love and because of your faithfulness."

Congregation:

"Why should the heathen say, 'Where then is their God?'"

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

"Our God is in heaven, and whatever God wills to do comes to pass."

Congregation:

"Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands."

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

"They have mouths, but they cannot speak; eyes have they, but they cannot see."

Congregation:

"They have ears, but they cannot hear; noses, but they cannot smell."

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

"They have hands, but they cannot feel; feet, but they cannot walk; they make no sound with their throat."

Congregation:

"Those who make them are like them, and so are all who put their trust in them."

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

"May you be blessed by God, the maker of heaven and earth."

Congregation:

"The heaven of heavens belongs to God, who entrusted the earth to its peoples."

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

"The dead do not praise God, nor all those who go down into silence."

Congregation:

"But we will bless God, from this time forth for evermore. Alleluia."

MUSIC:

Brothers and sisters.

Brothers and sisters.

By the mercies of God.

I call upon you.

I call upon you.

Present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

Holy and well-pleasing to God.

Which is your reasonable worship.

Prophecies will come to an end.

Prophecies.

Knowledge will come to an end.

But love never ends.

Love never ends.

And when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.

Do not be conformed to the present age.

But transformed by the renewing of the mind.

So that you may discern the will of God.

What is good.

What is well-pleasing.

What is good and perfect.

Amen.

Amen.

Amen.

Seth Moulton:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Seth Moulton:

The reading is from Chronicles 28:20. "David said to Solomon his son, 'Be strong and courageous. Do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you.'"

I came to Morning Prayers almost every day for seven years that I was at Harvard, with few exceptions. Though, most of those exceptions were on Saturday mornings. And I sat right there in that pew. I learned a lot here, and met some of the most wonderful people I know, including dear, lifelong friends, like Muffet, lifelong mentors, like Peter, and many a famous person I would otherwise have had no business to meet. But in all those years, the single Morning Prayers conversation I remember most actually occurred on the way to prayers, a half mile northwest of here at the intersection of Garden and Chauncy Street, when I was hit by a car on my bicycle and went flying headfirst over this man's hood.

As I was picking myself up off the pavement, the man, too well-dressed to get out of his luxury vehicle, rolled down his window and peered out and said, "Did you scratch my car?" "What witty retort did you have?" You might ask. I had nothing. I was shocked, discombobulated, I dare say. But I picked myself up, got back on my bike, and made it to prayers. And let me tell you, honestly, I have never felt like more of a hero in my life sitting there quietly, still on time, in that very pew with blood oozing through my pants, all so that I could hear the gospel of the Lord. I might as well have fought my way to Palestine in the Crusades. This was courage! Afghan girls may brave permanent slavery to go to school, but for a Harvard student, a scraped knee was borderline Homeric.

I came to Morning Prayers, dare I say, fought my way to Morning Prayers some days, primarily because I was inspired by one man: the former preacher of this church, the Reverend Professor Peter J. Gomes. He remains the greatest mentor I've ever had in life. But as a practical matter, it all began with simply inspiring me to come to church. How did he inspire? Every time I heard him, Peter would enlighten you, motivate you, make you laugh hilariously, but always, always challenge you in the process. It is the latter for which I remain most grateful. I came here not out of a feeling of religious obligation, but for the simple fact that I felt that what I heard here helped make me a little better person, and I knew enough as an undergraduate to know I could be a better person. Today, I find that same revelation occurs to me almost every day. I could do better. And I often wish many of my colleagues in Congress experienced it more often than that.

But here's the point. I came here not to be safe. Did I mention how perilous it could be to simply get here? I came here to be challenged. Harvard can be a big and intimidating place that doesn't always focus on the right things. As Peter was fond of saying, at Harvard, it's not about who you know, but whom. But here was 15 minutes at the beginning of the day to look yourself in the mirror, find some humility, not that Harvard people need help with that, and to hopefully, after some contemplation, consider how you might do a little better, not just for your sake, but for others. That's what Memorial Church did for me.

Challenging others perhaps came naturally to Peter, because of how much he challenged himself. His most well-known example was when he came out of the closet in 1996, when church was not a safe space for being gay, just indeed as many churches around the world are still not today. He came out of the closet and into a sea of anger and protest and calls for his resignation. How much easier it would've been for him to remain hidden. He never got married anyway. But he found the courage of his convictions, and wanted to help liberate others, and he did it. More broadly, he did it from this very pulpit every week.

We live in challenging times in the world, and in challenging times for Harvard. I believe Harvard will continue to lead only if it recognizes that it could do better, and challenges itself to change, and I think that's what Peter would've said in these times too. At the top of the list is challenging students, once again, to seek the truth. Not coddling and comforting them, you, to ensure you're not offended by the world or the views of others. Indeed, this is still the mission of the church, as I was happy to read this

week on the MemChurch website. "MemChurch aims to promote justice and mercy by confronting life's challenges, differences, and our own imperfections with courage, empathy, and an ethic of love." That's the church that Peter led. And as much as Peter was a man of the church, he was very much a man of this church.

Memorial Church will continue to live up to its mission, to his legacy, and to its place at the center of Harvard if it continues to challenge those of us who walk in the door. For the real work of this church is not about how you got here, though that can make for a good story. It's not even about what is said here. It's about what those of us who come here to pray do when we leave. Let us pray. Lord, may we have the courage of our convictions, and may we have convictions worthy of our courage. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

I invite you, please, now to rise and join in saying the words Jesus taught us. "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."

Congregation:

"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."

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Please join in singing our concluding hymn, number 88, O Lord of Life, Whose Power Sustains.

MUSIC:

O Lord of life, whose power sustains.

The world unseen no less than this: one family in Him who reigns.

Triumphant over death, in bliss.

To thee with thankfulness we pray.

For all our valiant dead today.

As nature's healing through the years.

Re-clothes the stricken battlefields.

So mercy gives us joy for tears.

And grief to proud remembrance yields.

And mindful hearts are glad to keep.

A tryst of love with them that sleep.

Not names engraved in marble make.

The best memorials of the dead.

But burdens shouldered for their sake.

And tasks completed in their stead.

A braver faith and stronger prayers.

Devouter worship, nobler cares.

O help us in the silence, Lord.

To hear the whispered call of love.

And day by day thy strength afford.

Our work to do, our faith to prove.

So be thy blessing richly shed.

On our communion with our dead.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

A reminder, please, to join us in the undercroft, the Student Oasis, after this service for fellowship and refreshments. And now glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory to God from generation to generation in the church, and to Christ Jesus forever and ever. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thanks be to God.

[inaudible 00:20:17].