

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Welcome to our daily worship of morning prayers here in Appleton Chapel. We're so grateful that you are here today. Our speaker for this morning is David von Behren, our own, the assistant university organist and choir master here in the Memorial Church. All who are able please rise in and spirit. For our responsive reading found in your black salter, Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

Audience:

He leadeth me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in straight paths for his name's sake.

Audience:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou hast anointed my head with oil. My cup runneth over.

Audience:

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

You may be seated.

MUSIC:

(singing)

David von Behren:

This past August, I celebrated the birthday of my beloved music teacher, Mildred Appleoff-Marsh. I love birthday parties, but this was a very special birthday party. This was Mildred's 97th birthday. Mrs. A, as her students call her, taught high school vocal music for 25 years. In her retirement, she continued to stay busy teaching, finding so much joy in her time with her students and the music they were playing. Mrs. A, to this day, is one of my closest mentors and friends. She lives alone, drives, reads, listens to music and plays the piano. What baffles all who know her, myself included, is how she stays so youthful. It's not as if she hasn't endured her share of problems and challenges. I remember asking her, "Mrs. A,

how do you remain so positive and joyful in such a terrible situation?" She responded, "What choice do I have? The key is gratitude." It is no secret to us gathered here today that gratitude rewires the brain.

Research scientist, Ying Chen writes, in a T.H. Chan School of Public Health article dated July 3rd, 2024, quote, "Prior research indicated that there are ways of intentionally fostering gratitude, such as writing down or discussing what you are grateful for a few times a week. Promoting healthy aging is a public health priority and we hope further studies will improve our understanding of gratitude as a psychological resource for enhancing longevity," end quote. As I look out at our loyal morning prayers attendees, I am reminded of the gratitude they share with this community. I am reminded of Maya Angelou's singing in a short film she recorded near the end of her life. She sings the words to a spiritual, when it looks like the sun will not shine anymore, God put a rainbow in the clouds. She says, "I have had so many rainbows in my clouds. I have had a lot of clouds, but I have had so many rainbows."

This morning I'd like to step into the spiritual realm and enjoy how gratitude can be expressed as praise to the Lord. Chinese revivalist and evangelist, Brother Watchman Nee notes that David writes in Psalm 55 that he prayed to God three times a day. Yet in Psalm 119, David writes that he praised God seven times a day. Brother Nee says that the happiest persons are not always the ones who have the loudest praise. The loudest praise comes very often from the ones who are passing through hardships. Wow, what a concept. Perhaps our praising is next-level prayer. Brother Nee elaborates upon this. He says in his book, Praising, "One day you will find that you cannot utter a praise. On such days you are in pain, total darkness or dire trouble. On such days you suffer misunderstanding and slander. You are busy shedding tears of self-pity. How can you praise God on such days?"

You cannot praise him because you are wounded, suffering pain, and in difficulty yet you should bless him simply because he is worthy of all blessings. Although you are in the midst of difficulties, he is still worthy to be praised. Although you are in distress, you still have to praise him. At that moment, your praise becomes a sacrifice of praise. Your praise is like the slaughter of your fattest calf. It is like putting your dear Isaac on the altar. Your praise in tears is a sacrifice of praise. You are wounded before God. You die before God. You suffer loss and you sacrifice before God, but you realize that God's throne is established in the heavens and cannot be shaken and you do not hold back your praise. This is the sacrifice of praise. God desires his children to praise him in everything and through every situation."

If there is one important realization I've had in the last couple of years, it's this. We may be suffering in our body or mind, in our flesh, but friends, let's step forward from gratitude into praise. When we call upon the name of the Lord, we are one with him in our spirit, and our spirit is mingled with him in that moment, in a separate realm from this world. Lord Jesus, we praise you for your life dwelling within us. Let us pray. We thank you Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ, your son, our Lord. You kept us safely through the night and brought us to the morning light. Be with us through this day we pray and keep us safe from Satan's way, that all we think or do or say, please only you, our strength and stay. Into your hands we now commend our body and soul until life's end. Your angels keep us safe from harm until we rest in Jesus' arms. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

All who are able please rise and now let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples saying, our Father...

Audience:

... 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, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Now let us sing together, Hymn number 342, How great thou art.

MUSIC:

Oh, Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder.
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made.
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder.
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee.
How great thou art. How great thou art.
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee.
How great thou art. How great thou art.
When through the woods and forest glades I wander.
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur.
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze.
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee.
How great thou art. How great thou art.
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee.
How great thou art. How great thou art.
And when I think how God, his Son not sparing.
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in.
That on the cross, my burdens gladly bearing.
He bled and died to take away my sin.
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee.
How great thou art. How great thou art.
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee.
How great thou art. How great thou art.
When Christ shall come with shouts of acclamation.
To take me home, what joy will fill my heart.
Then I will bow in humble adoration.
And there proclaim, my God, how great thou art.
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee.
How great thou art. How great thou art.
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee.

How great thou art. How great thou art.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

As we leave this place but never away from God's presence may we know that God is great. May we be grateful for life as we behold God's creation. May we be grateful for each and every other person in this room. As we go forth into the world may we be rooted in gratitude. Let us bless the Lord.

Audience:

Thanks be to God.