

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Welcome to the Appleton Chapel here in our memorial church for our daily service of morning prayers. Our speaker this morning is Dhruv Goel, who is a senior at the college. Also, one change to your printed program, our closing hymn today will be number 14. The boards are correct, but your place mats are not correct. I invite you now please to rise and join in our responsorial psalm, which is number 30 in your black [inaudible 00:03:39].

I will exalt you, oh God, because you have lifted me up and have not let my enemies triumph over me.

Audience:

Oh my God, I ask you to restore me to my health.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

For divine wrath endures but the twinkling of an eye divine favor for a lifetime.

Audience:

Weeping may spend the night, but joy comes in the morning.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

While I felt secure, I said, I shall never be disturbed. You, oh God, with your favor made me as strong as the mountains.

Audience:

Then you hid your face and I was filled with fear.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

I cried to you, oh God, I pleaded with you saying-

Audience:

[inaudible 00:04:31] will the dust praise you or declare your faithfulness.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Hear, oh God, and have mercy upon me. Oh God, be my helper.

Audience:

[inaudible 00:04:52] you have put off my sackcloth and filled me with joy.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Therefore, my heart sings to you without ceasing. Oh God, my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

Dhruv Goel:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

Dhruv Goel:

Today's inspired text is from the book, the Good Life: Truths that Last in Times of Need by the late Reverend Professor Peter J. Gomes, who served as the Plummer Professor of Christian Morals at the Divinity School and the Pusey Minister of this church, the position that currently Reverend Potts holds and spoke from this very pulpit for 41 years.

From the Good Life, I quote, "Love is not something we believe, have, keep or give. It is something we do. And in its doing, love shows forth works. The world is a work of God's love. Children are the work of the love of their parents. Forgiveness is a work of love, of one toward another. Love is the supreme virtue because in comprehending us as we are and not as we ought to be or would be, it has the capacity to affect in us a transformation, even an exaltation that will sustain us long after the fresh blush of enthusiasm will have passed."

I grew up in a small suburb of Mumbai, infamous for its stray dog problem. Every night when I would go out with my dad and sister to walk our dog, Simba, we would be assailed by the constant yapping of several street dogs, seemingly threatening at any moment to bite us, but never actually coming closer than a few meters. As a child, I was mortally afraid of them. And what scared me even more was the fact that my dad, the only strong grown up man I knew, would need to carry a stick to ensure our safety.

That is until my little sister came up with a solution. This girl who is now a sophomore in college in California, I have known her for all her life and all but three years of mine, but I still have so much to learn from her. She noticed one day that a few newborn puppies on the street looked hungry and decided to bring them some milk from home. Initially, their mother, who was not very far away, barked and resisted. Well, when she realized that my sister was giving her children food, she soon started licking her hand and running about her in delight.

Over the next few weeks, with the help of some neighbors with similar intentions, my sister set up a program in our apartment complex for us to feed and take care of these street dogs. To bring them food and milk every night, but also to give them blankets to sleep on and to get them veterinarian care as needed. They were no longer stray dogs. We had adopted them.

Each time I went back home for a summer or winter break from college, I would go out with my sister every night without fail to feed the [foreign language 00:12:12]. [foreign language 00:12:12] being an endearing term for children in Hindi. Unsurprisingly, the problem of street dogs barking at or bothering pedestrians was resolved in no time. Since the dogs on my street recognized my sister as the bringer of food, they loved and protected her as one of their own. By association, my dad, Simba and I also became their friends. And every time they saw us, they would instead of barking at us, greet us by licking our hands and wagging their tails in excitement.

We no longer needed to carry sticks for our safety. These dogs, they were not looking for reasons to attack human beings. They were afraid, hungry, tired of fending for themselves and tired of being misunderstood. They were in desperate need of love. And when they were given it, they immediately

transformed from scary beasts to the sweetest, most precious little creatures filled with more life and joy than I could have imagined.

I believe that my sister's acts are a good example of what Reverend Gomes must have meant when he said that, "Love is something we do." As a senior reflecting on my time at Harvard, I know there have been times where I have felt like I could have used more love and understanding from my peers. Yet, there have been way more occasions when I have felt love so powerful and moving that it has shaped me as a person and sustained me through my darkest days. Such as the love I developed for my suitemates this year and the love they have for me, or the love of God I feel every single morning singing in this gorgeous chapel with this stunningly talented group of human beings.

I'm not saying that feeding those dogs in our neighborhood as we did will solve Mumbai's stray dog crisis. I'm not saying that love alone will suffice to end all wars or to solve all of the world's many complicated problems. No, that would be too optimistic and naive. Yet, deep in my heart, I know that if there is one force that will give us the strength to face and overcome our biggest challenges and unite us in ways that we desperately need in this difficult hour, then it is love.

Will you pray with me? Oh God of all encompassing love, oh God, whose love is as wide as the sky and as deep as the sea and whose love sustains us through our lives, teach us to love one another as you love us always. Teach us to love ourselves with all our flaws and teach us to love all your creation and its inhabitants. Teach us to do in loving and to love in doing, that we may through our deeds and not just our words, show forth your love.

I invite you now to rise in body of spirit and join me in saying the Lord's Prayer. 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 to 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, forever and ever. Amen.

Audience:

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Dhruv Goel:

I invite you now to join in singing hymn 14 in [inaudible 00:17:11].

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Please join us in the undercroft after this service for mem cafe and in this chapel tonight at 5:15 for a service of holy communion. 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 in Christ Jesus forever and ever. Amen.

Audience:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

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Let us bless the Lord.

Audience:

Thanks be to God.