

Harriett Leindeman:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Harriett Leindeman:

And welcome to Morning Prayers here at Appleton Chapel. Our speaker this morning is Dr. Evelyn M. Hammonds, Barbara Gutmann Rosenkrantz Professor of the History of Science. Welcome. This will be our last Morning Prayers before the university's spring break, so we'll see you back on Monday, March 18th. Please rise, in body or in spirit, for a responsive reading of Psalm 40, found in your Black Psalter. "I waited patiently for you, O God; you stooped to me and heard my cry."

Congregation:

"You lifted me out of the desolate pit, out of the mire and clay; you set my feet upon a high cliff and made my footing sure."

Harriett Leindeman:

"You put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God."

Congregation:

"Many shall see, and stand in awe, and put their trust in you."

Harriett Leindeman:

"In sacrifice and offering you take no pleasure, you have given me ears to hear you."

Congregation:

"Burnt-offering and sin-offering you have not required, and so I said, 'Behold, I come.'"

Harriett Leindeman:

"In the roll of the book it is written concerning me: 'I love to do your will, O my God, your law is deep in my heart.'"

Congregation:

"I proclaimed righteousness in the great congregation. Behold, I did not restrain my lips, and that, O God, you know."

Harriett Leindeman:

"Your righteousness have I not hidden in my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your deliverance. I have not concealed your love and faithfulness from the great congregation."

Congregation:

"You are the holy one; do not withhold your compassion from me. Let your love and your faithfulness keep me safe for ever."

Choir:
(singing).

Evelynn Hammonds:
Good morning.

Congregation:
Good morning.

Evelynn Hammonds:

So, I'd like to begin with a reading from Philippians 2:2-4. "So if there's any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interest of others."

So, if anyone has been reading the newspapers lately, they couldn't help but notice the overwhelming number of stories day after day since early October that claim that Harvard is an educational institution where antisemitism runs rampant. Most of these claims have been made by outsiders purporting to speak for those who are on campus. Very little else is mentioned in these articles, tweets, and other social media posts about what is happening on Harvard's campus these days. These reports have been deeply troubling to me, as I have been part of the Harvard community for almost 40 years. I arrived here in 1985 after finishing a graduate degree at MIT. I can still remember the first time I walked into the main reading room in Widener Library, and I was awed by the beauty of that great room. As I began my PhD studies in the history of science, being in a diverse community of students, faculty, and staff who were committed to pursuing knowledge at the highest level was exhilarating, and I was committed to doing well here, and joining the long and great tradition of scholars, teachers, and students who have lived and worked here.

So, what do we do when your community, your intellectual and physical home, is attacked and mischaracterized? Do we uncritically accept such characterizations? Do we turn our heads in shame? Do we ask ourselves hard questions about what made many people accept the view that this campus, our classrooms, are sites of rampant incivility, rancor, and intolerance? I think yes, we have to ask what has happened to us that so many inside and outside of our community see us in such negative ways. Indeed, Harvard is a microcosm of the world, and as such, there is antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism, homophobia, transphobia, et cetera, in our community. We have to push ourselves to find the truth as to whether there is something to be known about these issues that are manifesting on our campus.

But we also have to ask other questions as well. Do we run away when we are questioned and ask what we stand for? Or do we run toward those questions, embrace them, and ask everybody we interact with here, faculty, students, staff, and other workers who make our lives possible every day, what do we think is happening and how can we be better? In the aftermath of the bombing that took place at the Boston Marathon in 2013, many observers commented on the fact that so many people ran toward where the bombs went off instead of running away from them. People ran to protect, to help protect the wounded and stop the violence, and to help all facing the horror of what had happened. I was dean

of the college when that bombing happened, and for almost a week, the campus was traumatized by the events. We didn't know who or where the perpetrators were, the city was on lockdown, but we held together as a community during that time.

Now, having made this connection between the experience between the days following the marathon bombing and our situation today, I know that there will be many who challenge and criticize me for making such a connection. But I do so because now, like then, in the face of unspeakable tragedy and uncertainty, caring for community is always the right response. So, I'm speaking here in this hallowed space from my heart. It is time for everyone in this community to run toward each other, to embrace our differences and our common values. We need to attend to those who are suffering and struggling with trying to understand if we are who so many say we are. Or are we better than they know?

So, I stand here today and I say, as a member of the Harvard University community, we are not who they say we are. Through change and through storm, as the words of fair Harvard remind us, we are a community that, for almost 400 years, has strived for excellence and a belief that we can build together a community built on a commitment to knowledge, change, justice, and a willingness to honor our commonalities and our differences.

Do we still have much work to do to make our community one where we live our values? Indeed we do, and it would be foolish to ignore this fact. It has taken many, many years for me to feel that I was accepted and not just tolerated in this community. And because of the efforts of so many, Harvard has become a place that continues to embrace change and, as a result, became an institution that was more inclusive and welcoming to me and so many others who felt marginalized and ignored when they arrived here. That is why I can stand here today and say emphatically, and without reservation, that we are not who they say we are. And it is time for all of us who believe this to say so. As the great poet Audre Lorde told us, we must do this, because our silence will not protect us.

So, I want to end my despair about the ways we have been mischaracterized and misrepresented by joining with all who want to speak and work to renew, to rebuild, and reconnect to the best that we are. We owe it to our ancestors, ourselves, and our children to speak out loudly, to not let false narratives erode our faith in each other. We are not who they say we are.

Harriett Leindeman:

O, creator God, we give thanks for being together on this day that you have made. Let this week ahead be a time of connection and rest, and bring us back safely, prepared to continue to move towards a community that holds one another with care, and supports one another in the work of justice. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Harriett Leindeman:

And now, let us pray as Jesus taught, saying, "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:

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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."

Harriett Leindeman:

Please rise, in body or in spirit, as we sing Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, number 299.

Congregation:

(singing).

Harriett Leindeman:

And now 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.

Congregation:

Amen.