

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Welcome to our daily morning prayers here in Appleton Chapel. We're excited that we are in our Senior Talks, and our speaker today is Heavyn Lee, who is a senior here at Harvard College and representing Eliot House. Thank you for being here today, Heavyn.

All who able, please rise. For our responsive reading surrounding your black salters in front of you, front pew. Here we will be reading Psalm 84. Psalm 84, which is found on page 42. Psalm 84.

"How lovely is your dwelling place, oh Lord of hosts."

Congregation:

"My soul longs, indeed, and faints for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh sing with joy to the living God."

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

"Even the sparrow finds a home and the swallow nest for herself where she may lay her young at your altars, oh Lord of hosts, my king and my God."

Congregation:

"Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise."

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

"Happy are those whose strength is in you and whose hearts are the highways to Zion."

Congregation:

"As they go through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs. The early rain also covers it with pools."

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

"Behold our shield, oh God. Look on the face of your anointed."

Congregation:

"For a day in your course is better than 1,000 elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God than live in the tents of the wickedness."

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

"For the Lord God is a son and shield. He bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly."

Congregation:

"Oh Lord of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you."

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

You may be seated.

Choir:

(Singing).

Heavyn Lee:

"More likely to be heard before he is seen, lies the guardian of Eliot House," Building Manager Paul Haggerty. Like any great guardian privy to the Eliot lore of people past, present, and future, he's introduced me to great tales and left me with greater maxims. Like, "What a day," or, "Have fun."

On one particular day, perhaps seeing that my mind was a bit busier than usual, he leaned back in his throne of an office chair and crossed his arms. "Do you want to make God laugh? Then tell him your plans." You'd think that'd be enough to keep my plans to myself, but these past few weeks, as one person after another asked what I am pursuing post-grad, I am positive that God can barely catch his breath. In scenarios like these, I try to fashion my future under a name, words that people are familiar enough with that will not prolong the conversation into uncharted territory. Proctor. Law firm. Miami. Vocabulary that is exciting enough so that at least half of the work is done for me.

I like to think it was a strategy my mother employed when she named me Heavyn Lee. With such a title, it made it so that all that was required of me during first impressions was to smile and wave. The remaining bulk of the effort would befall the imaginations of whoever was at the other end of the exchange. So far, I have had people quote scripture, and in some cases, had people burst out into song, even when all I wanted was to cancel my subscription over the phone.

By far, the best response to my name though would not come until my sophomore year of college. As far as first impressions go, I admittedly was not in my most ethereal state. Dawned in my pajamas after a late-night house committee meeting, just as I was about to go upstairs, my faculty dean, Stephanie Paulsell, finally able to put a face to a name, said to me, "With a name like that, you must have been loved."

I give credence to my mother's naming ability and my genesis to say that many of us here have been knighted with an amorphous title, that of a Harvard affiliate or Harvard student, and in a matter of weeks turned alum. The responses to our name, our degree, and privilege experience may vary, but I suspect that in many occasions, the name will do much of the work for us just the same. We will have conversations in which others will have already filled in the blanks. With such storied nomenclature, in my case biblical, and in Harvard's case, steeped in antiquity, I hope that the name serves not to place parameters on what you ought to be and where you ought to land, but gives you room to become.

After Audre Lorde's passing, Arlene Keizer, an Afro-Caribbean American poet and scholar who writes about literature, lived experience, theory, and visual art of the African diaspora, reflects, "Audre Lorde refused to be silenced, refused to be limited to any one category, insisted on being all that she was. Poet, Black, mother, lesbian, feminist, warrior, activist, woman. As I grieve her passing on, I cannot help but think of the irony that we split her into separate parts. So many white feminists and lesbians respond only to her lesbianism, Blacks, to her race activism, literary critics to her poetic craft, Mother Goddess followers to our African goddesses. If there is any tribute we can give you, it is to acknowledge all those parts of yourself without which you would not be you."

Whether you have polished your elevator pitch or are still securing the names ascribed to you, lean lovingly past and into the probably inconvenient surrender of what you have yet to be. Montaigne, a French philosopher, said, "I study myself more than any other subject. That is my metaphysics, that is my physics." As many of us pursue personhood outside of Harvard's brick borders, I ask that you undertake this curriculum of being, of self-study, of holy work, in the words of scholar Kevin Quashie, with me.

I consider the part of myself that took meetings in pajamas and that stands before you today in tandem. All evidence of love, all things that when I reflect on, if not laughter, at least leave God amused. Thank you.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Please rise for prayer. Let us pray. Creator, Redeemer, loving one, we acknowledge that we all have names, names filled with purpose and destiny. May we not be limited, but may we be free to become all that you call us to be in this world. Amen.

And let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. Saying, Our Father...

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 forever and ever. Amen.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Now, let us sing our closing hymn, Hymn 262, found in your crimson hymnal, entitled Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation.

Congregation:

(Singing).

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Thank you, Heavyn, for such a beautiful talk. Those who would like to join us downstairs today, we have MemCafe. Please join us downstairs for coffee and light refreshments if you have the time.

As we leave this place, but never away from God's presence, as we leave this gathering, but never away from God's love, may no walls, limitations, or confines keep you away from becoming all that God calls you to be. Go in peace. Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thanks be to God.