

Harriett Lindeman:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

Harriett Lindeman:

And welcome to morning prayers here at Appleton Chapel. Our speaker this morning, Julie Hang, is of Kirkland House and will be starting the tradition of senior talks. So welcome.

Please rise in body or in spirit for a reading of Psalm 72 found in your black salter. "Give the king thy justice, O God, and thy righteousness to the royal son."

Audience:

"May he judge thy people with righteousness and thy court with justice."

Harriett Lindeman:

"Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people and the hills in righteousness."

Audience:

"May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy and crush the oppressors."

Harriett Lindeman:

May he live while the sun endures and as long as the moon throughout all generations."

Audience:

"May he be like rain that falls on mowed grass, like showers that water the earth."

Harriett Lindeman:

"In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound till the moon be no more."

Audience:

"May he have dominion from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth."

Harriett Lindeman:

"May all the kings fall down before him, all nations serve him."

Audience:

"For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper"

Choir:

(singing)

Julie Hang:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

Julie Hang:

So last Saturday, I was standing in the rain watching a freight train go by, which is riveting, I know. There were some hundreds of wagons. Maybe one or two were open air. Those carried lumber. The rest carried standardized containers that were good enough to make a supply chain manager proud. Interestingly, almost every container had graffiti messages on the side. Some were clearly political, some satirical, some were not in English, but one stood out to me in bold white letters. It said, "Lead with the heart." Lead with the heart.

Since I read it, I've been wondering about this phrase a lot and on a meta level, I've also been wondering why this particular phrase got stuck in my head. It is the latest in a long line of things that get stuck in Julie's head. Stuck things, if you will. In junior year fall, I got obsessed with this question that the philosopher Martha Nussbaum posed of whether one can be reliably good and still beautifully human.

I often think of what our beloved Kirkland House faculty Dean, David Deming, tells us at our holiday dinners, that amid the many opportunities for us to strive to pursue resume virtues, that it is harder still to practice eulogy virtues, to do good, to be kind. And there are tons more, of course. Joan Didion, Frida Kahlo, Virginia Woolf, and Andrew Murray lines that echo in my head long after I hear them ring.

I'm sure you can remember phrases or perhaps songs or films or photographs that get stuck in your head. Things that you turn over and over until they smooth out or that you simply can't stop talking about to everyone else. I am extremely guilty on this front, by the way. My quoting the poet, Rainer Maria Rilke has become a meme to the point that my roommate, Melissa, sometimes tells me that I've reached my Rilke quota for the week.

But sometimes I go spelunking in the meta level data of my stuck things, and I'll parse through the albums recommended by Chase and the poetry sent by Mira and notice the frequency, the duration and amplitude of what's on my mind and whether it got there deliberately or unconsciously. As far as I can tell, the science isn't settled, but researchers say that ear worms come from your brain trying to trace a melody to its completion because you haven't yet configured how the song ends. So then maybe stuck things are stuck because they're in the process of resolving because we're testing them in real time, holding them up against new contexts and changing light.

Here's something that constantly leaves me awestruck. Despite how things resonate differently to us, we keep trying to understand one another. Obviously, what is on our minds is highly contingent on infinite environmental factors, assumptions and upbringings and perfect translation is impossible. And yet we still vehemently try to understand each other's stuck things. When we speak, it's a leap of faith. When we listen, we approximate these ways of seeing and being in the world like many experiments in curiosity and sincerity.

I want to try such an experiment now. If you'll bear with me, you might see that there's a slip of paper and pencil in front of you. And if you'd like, I want to invite you to take a moment and share something, anything that has been on your mind. You could draw something, write down a song lyric, note something you're yearning for, describe something that you've wanted to try for a long time. And when you're done, admittedly, I have not thought about the logistics of this, but I'd love for us to trade cards

with one another. Maybe I can collect them and we can bring them out or we can trade them. But kind of like a small piece of graffiti, a little leap of faith.

Last fall, I went to the yard with a sign asking strangers what's on their mind. Few passersby made eye contact and frankly, I was terrified. But on a scale of clunky to extremely awkward, I had no clue how this would go. Would I be able to connect with anyone? Would they even want to? I kept smiling though and tried to lead with curiosity and sincerity and by the end of the sunny afternoon, dozens had shared their anxieties and hopes with me. We learned about each other's stuck things, and I think we all ended up stuck on each other a little bit too. As far as I can tell, this is what it means to lead with the heart.

Thank you.

Group:

We'll take a moment of quiet for everyone to write what's on their mind for a moment. And when you're ready, please rise in body or in spirit. Prayer.

Let us pray as Jesus taught his disciples 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 to 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.

Let us sing the hymn, Oh, Be Joyful in the Lord, Number seven.

(singing)

Harriett Lindeman:

Now as we prepare to leave this place, the peace of God be in your hearts, the love of God be in your hands, the joy of God in your soul. Go in peace. Amen.

Audience:

Amen.