

SPEAKER 1: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

SPEAKER 1: And welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with the responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book, Psalm selection 18 found on page number 9. Please stand as you are able as we read responsively by [? Holthaus. ?]

I adore you, Oh Lord my strength.

AUDIENCE: Oh Lord, my rock, my fortress, my rescuer, my God.

SPEAKER 1: My rock in whom I seek refuge, my shield, my mighty champion, my haven.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

SPEAKER 1: Ropes of shale encircled me, snares of death confronted me.

AUDIENCE: In mighty stress I call on the Lord, crying out to my Father. In his temple he heard my voice. My [INAUDIBLE] have reached his ears.

SPEAKER 1: You have given me the shield of your protection, Your right hand has sustained me, Your care has made me great.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] freely, my feet have not slipped.

SPEAKER 1: For this I sing your praise among the nations, Lord, and [INAUDIBLE] your name.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] and his off-spring forever.

[SINGING]

SPEAKER 2: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

SPEAKER 2: A reading from The Unbearable Lightness of Being by Milan Kundera. "If every second of our lives recurs an infinite number of times, we are nailed to eternity as Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross. It is a terrifying prospect. In the world of eternal return the weight of unbearable responsibility lies heavy on every move we make. That is why Nietzsche called the idea of eternal return the heaviest of burdens. If eternal return is the heaviest of burdens, then our lives can stand out against it in all their splendid lightness."

It's October, and I'm sitting on the floor of my common room. My freshman roommate sits across from me. We're celebrating our birthdays which fall one day apart. And we're laughing because we made the boys from downstairs come up to light the candles on our cake and sing happy birthday to us. We make our wishes and blow out the candles, and suddenly I realize that I'm finally learning how to call this place home.

It's February, and I'm crying in my common room at 2:00 AM. I'm upset because the boy I like didn't text me back, or something similarly insignificant. But the roommates who have been my support system throughout my junior year aren't here right now. So it's just me and the weight of this place and the challenges it brings, which I feel bearing down upon me now more than ever.

It's November, and I'm rowing down the Charles. We're pushing through the end of a tough practice, collectively mustering the energy for the day's last few hundred meters. As a junior year walk-on to the varsity crew team, I admittedly didn't expect very much out of it. Given my lack of athletic experience and my subsequent lack of a rowers build, I'm lucky just to be sitting amongst my teammates during practice, in boats comprised of elite recruits and national champions.

In the year and a half since I joined the team, I've oftentimes struggled to see myself as an athlete. But right now none of that matters, it can't matter. Because all that matters are my blade entering the water in time with the blades in front of me, my body moving with the speed of the boat, my hands finishing each stroke as cleanly as possible. And my lungs ache and my legs burn as bright as the autumn leaves alongside the river. And I tell myself that this is all I've ever wanted. And that's the truth.

Each of these moments, these snapshots of Harvard, are my experiences. But I imagine they represent some sort of a collective student sentiment. We take chances and make mistakes and fall short and fall in love. And sometimes it's all worth it, but sometimes it's not. We do it to find ourselves, redefine ourselves, or lose ourselves. We are at times crushed by the weight of our burdens and at other times buoyed by the lightness of our optimism. And if these walls could talk they'd be speechless with the weight of the unkempt promises and secret histories of centuries of students who have walked these hallowed grounds.

So let this serve as a reminder this morning at the start of the spring semester that these walls contain just a little bit of magic. And when you find yourself crying in your common room at 2:00 AM-- because these moments will come, I promise you that-- I hope you let yourself be lifted up by the people and the memories you have made that have made this place into a home. Let them stand out against your darker moments in all their splendid magical lightness.

As I stand here looking out at the one final semester of college that looms in front of me, I realize I'm not ready. I feel the weight of all that I haven't done, all the experiences gone un-lived, and the words left unspoken. Life doesn't wait until we're ready though. And sometimes all we can do is close our eyes, take a step, and hope to God we get there. But right

now, it doesn't matter where I'm going, or whether I'm ready, or how much I have left to do. Because in my mind it's October and I'm sitting on the floor of my common room. Let us pray.

May God give us the strength to shoulder all our burdens in the humility to ground us in all our lightness. May this allow us to find the courage to fight the good fight of faith, and to never cease. May we never, not in our worst moments and certainly not in our best, lose sight of God, Amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen.

SPEAKER 2: Would you now join me in The Lord's Prayer.

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

SPEAKER 1: Will you please stand as you are able to sing the hymn, "Jesus on the mountain Peak." Hymn number 139 in your crimson Harvard Hymnal. Hymn number 139.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[SINGING]

As we go into this day, may the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you, and may the Lord grant you peace. And the gathered people said,

AUDIENCE: Amen.