

Congregation:

[inaudible 00:00:02].

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Welcome to our daily worship service here, our Morning Prayers at Appleton Chapel. We're grateful today that our speaker will be Maliya Ellis, who is from our choir. We're so excited to hear from you today. All those who are able, please rise for our responsive reading, found in your Psalter, Psalm 112. "O praise the Lord. Happy is the man who fears the Lord and finds great joy in His commandments. His descendants shall be the mightiest in the land, a blessed generation of good men."

Congregation:

"His descendants shall be the mightiest in the land, a blessed generation of good men."

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

"His house shall be full of wealth and riches; righteousness shall be his forever. He is gracious, compassionate, good, a beacon in the darkness for honest men."

Congregation:

"He is gracious, compassionate, good, a beacon in the darkness for honest men."

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

"It is right for a man to be gracious in his lending, to order his affairs with judgment. Nothing shall ever shake him; his goodness shall be remembered for all time."

Congregation:

"Nothing shall ever shake him; his goodness shall be remembered for all time."

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

"Bad news shall have no terrors for him, because his heart is steadfast. His confidence is strongly based, he will have no fear; and in the end he will gloat over his enemies."

Congregation:

"His confidence is strongly based, he will have no fear; and in the end he will gloat over his enemies."

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

"He gives freely to the poor; righteousness shall be his forever. In honor, he carries his head high. The wicked man shall see it with rising anger and grind his teeth in despair; the hopes of wicked men shall come to nothing."

Congregation:

"The wicked man shall see it with rising anger and grind his teeth in despair; the hopes of wicked men shall come to nothing."

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

You may be seated.

MUSIC:

Swing low, sweet chariot.

Coming for to carry me home.

Swing low, sweet chariot.

Coming for to carry me home.

Coming for to carry me home.

Swing low.

Swing low.

Sweet chariot.

Coming for to carry me home.

Swing low.

Swing low.

Sweet chariot.

Coming for to carry me home.

I looked over Jordan, and what did I see.

Coming for to carry me home.

A band of angels coming after me.

Coming for to carry me home.

Coming for to carry me home.

Swing low.

Swing low.

Sweet chariot.

Coming for to carry me home.

Swing low.

Swing low.

Sweet chariot.

Coming for to carry me home.

If you get there before I do.

Coming for to carry me home.
Tell all my friends I'm coming too.
Coming for to carry me home.
Coming for to carry me home.
Swing low.
Swing low.
Sweet chariot.
Coming for to carry me home.
Swing low.
Swing low.
Sweet chariot.
Coming for to carry me home.
The brightest day that ever I saw.
Coming for to carry me home.
When Jesus washed my sins away.
Coming for to carry me home.
Coming for to carry me home.
Swing low.
Swing low.
Sweet chariot.
Coming for to carry me home.
Swing low.
Swing low.
Sweet chariot.
Coming for to carry me home.
I'm sometimes up and sometimes down.
Coming for to carry me home.
But still my soul feels heavenly bound.
Coming for to carry me home.
Coming for to carry me home.
Swing low.
Swing low.
Sweet chariot.
Coming for to carry me home.
Swing low.
Swing low.
Sweet chariot.

Coming for to carry me home.

Coming for to carry me home.

Coming for to carry me.

Coming for to carry me home.

Coming for to carry me.

Coming for to carry me.

Coming for to carry me home.

Maliya Ellis:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Maliya Ellis:

Today's inspired text is a saying from my high school English teacher. What do you do when you don't know what to do? You do what you practice. I took that phrase to heart in 2020 after COVID sent me home halfway through my freshman spring. The pandemic was like a harsh overhead light flicked on in the middle of a lovely dream. It unsettled and disillusioned me, and I'm lucky to be able to speak about it in metaphors. I decided to take a gap year, to avoid Zoom classes.

That fall, my first ever autumn as a non-student in my entire sentient life, I didn't know what to do, so I imposed routines on myself to give shape to the overwhelm of days that stretched before me. I went on long runs. I listened to podcasts, pre-recorded, while I cooked single pan meals. I took up YouTube yoga, and I tried to imagine the thousands of people downward dogging simultaneously around the world, and conjure a sense of community. But I was lonely. For the first time, my lifelong habit of journaling didn't provide me real comfort, beyond a temporary catharsis. When I put pen to paper, the act of writing externalized my negative thoughts, but it never excised them.

What I was really practicing, as I had for most of my high school experience, was a philosophical model of self-reliance. I would find the answers within myself, and I didn't need a helping hand, thank you very much. That model had gotten me through high school, and arguably got me into Harvard. But it's not the model that I subscribe to anymore. And I credit that change, in large part, to being part of the university choir. If other competition-based activities are about individual excellence, being in a choir is about the collective. Outperforming your neighbor yields no rewards. Self-reliance is not enough. And that way, it's a respite from the zero-sum mindset that runs so rampant on this campus. Believe me, a glare from our conductor Ed will cure even the worst case of main character syndrome.

But it's also not about conformity, nor about shirking your duty to the group. Individual excellence is not the end goal, but it is a prerequisite. When we rehearse, one of Ed's requests is that you raise your hand when you make a mistake. He maintains that it's not a naming and shaming device, but rather a way to make rehearsal more efficient. If he knows that you're aware of your mistake, he doesn't have to spend time fixing it. But as any choruser knows, raising your hand isn't just a marker of self-awareness, it's a public marker that you've erred. But in that way, it's a visible signal of our responsibility to each other. In a choir, ideally, the twin goals of individual and collective excellence are not at odds at all, but rather aligned. Being in a choir, then, forces you to recognize your interdependence. You're part of a whole. What we're practicing, in many ways, is being in responsible community with each other.

These days, the routines that structure my life and give it meaning are based in my relationships to other people. I start almost every morning by making music in this beautiful space. Afterwards, it's Annenberg breakfast with the fellows, swapping gossip over eggs and mini waffles. I have other routines, too. I love Wednesday night trivia at Charlie's Kitchen, or even just watching Sex in the City with my roommate on a random weekday night. I still like long runs and podcasts and journaling, but they're no longer my only outlet, nor nearly my most essential one. I now know that if I'm in a funk, the only surefire way to get out is to talk to a friend. That this notion would've been nearly unthinkable to my pandemic era self is a source of great hope for me. If I now know some answers to questions I hadn't even known to ask before, who knows what horizons of revelation might be to come?

On the immediate horizon, anyways, graduation ticks closer. I'd like to say that in these final weeks of college, I'm walking around filled with gratitude all the time. But it's hard not to wonder what other paths I could have taken through this institution. And, in dark moments, the sense of loss from the pandemic still feels raw. With it, a host of doubts is barely subterranean. How could things have been different? Did I make my mark on this institution? Did I dream big enough? But more often, I feel awed and grateful that I've existed in this special place with its special people, and I also feel proud of myself for attempting to shape it in my own small ways.

I've been thinking back to my English teacher's phrase, what do you do when you don't know what to do? You do what you practice. As I stand on the precipice of a new chapter, it would be accurate to say that I don't really know what to do, but I take comfort in knowing that I've been practicing, however imperfectly. That phrase is a descriptive statement, not a deterministic one. Our current practices don't have to be forever. We can forge new practices that take us to new places. I invite you to think today, what are you practicing in the small moments? And what would you like to be practicing? Will you pray with me? Dear God, we thank you for this place, these people, these moments of community and beauty that we create together with your help. We ask you for courage to practice what we believe, and make it real in the world. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

All who are able, please rise. Let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples. "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:

"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."

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Now, let us sing together our closing hymn, hymn number 4, For the Beauty of the Earth.

MUSIC:

For the beauty of the earth.
For the beauty of the skies.
For the love which from our birth.
Over and around us lies.
Christ, our Lord, to thee we raise.
This, our hymn of grateful praise.
For the beauty of each hour.
Of the day and of the night.
Hill and vale and tree and flower.
Sun and moon and stars of light.
Christ, our Lord, to thee we raise.
This, our hymn of grateful praise.
For the joy of ear and eye.
For the heart and mind's delight.
For the mystic harmony.
Linking sense to sound and sight.
Christ, our Lord, to thee we raise.
This, our hymn of grateful praise.
For the joy of human love.
Brother, sister, parent, child.
Friends on earth, and friends above.
For all gentle thoughts and mild.
Christ, our Lord, to thee we raise.
This, our hymn of grateful praise.
For the church that evermore.
Lifteth holy hands above.
Offering up on every shore.
Thy pure sacrifice of love.
Christ, our Lord, to thee we raise.
This, our hymn of grateful praise.

The Rev. Dr. Calvon Jones:

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 we practice knowing that we are part of a whole creation. Go in peace. Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

This transcript was exported on Apr 24, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

Thanks be to God. [inaudible 00:19:14].