

Harriett Lindeman:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Harriett Lindeman:

Welcome to morning prayers here at Appleton Chapel. This week we have our last few days of senior talks, and today we welcome Melanie Armella of Lincoln House. Just a note, there is a misprint and on Wednesday our own Soren Choi will be speaking, so be sure to be here to celebrate one of our beloved choir secretaries. Please rise in body or in spirit for responsive reading of Psalm 142.

I cry with my voice to the Lord, with my voice I make supplication to the Lord.

Congregation:

I pour out my complaint before Him. I tell my trouble before him.

Harriett Lindeman:

When my spirit is faint, Thou knowest my way. In the path where I walk, they have hidden a trap for me.

Congregation:

I look to the right and watch, but there is none who takes notice of me. No refuge remains to me, no man cares for me.

Harriett Lindeman:

I cry to thee, O Lord. I say Thou art my refuge, my portion and the land of the living.

Congregation:

Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low. Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me.

Harriett Lindeman:

Bring me out of prison that I may give thanks to Thy name.

Congregation:

The righteous will surround me, for Thou will deal bountifully with me.

Choir:

(singing)

Melanie Armella:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Melanie Armella:

I'd like to begin by sharing a poem by one of my favorite poets, Mary Oliver. This is Don't Hesitate. If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don't hesitate. Give into it. There are plenty of lives and whole towns destroyed or about to be. We are not wise and not very often kind, and much can never be redeemed. Still, life has some possibility left. Perhaps its way of fighting back, that sometimes something happens greater than all the riches or power in the world. It could be anything, but very likely you notice it in the instant when love begins. Anyway, that's often the case. Anyway, whatever it is, don't be afraid of its plenty. Joy is not made to be a crumb.

Loss is an inextricable part of our lives. It's in the nature of the world, a never-ending process of creation and destruction. Over spring break, I spent some time in the Harvard forest where I walked, meditated and spent time in community with others. While on a walk through the woods, our wonderful guides told us about the changing landscape of the area. As some flora and fauna become more prevalent, others slowly slip out of existence, fading into nothing but a memory. This process is innate to the natural world, but even so, I find it hard not to grieve the endings, the fact that I can't ever hold onto things or people or places.

I've been thinking a lot about grief lately. I used to think of grief as some sort of distinct period of life that we go in and out of after a loss. I think it's in the way we speak about grief. "She's mourning", "He's grieving", articles titled How to Deal with Grief, suggesting it's something that can be dealt with and moved on from. I've realized I've been grieving. Maybe I'm always in the process of mourning something. It became clear to me this semester, I've been mourning the end of my four years in college and this magnificent full life I've lived here, even while I'm still living it. Meeting my friends in the dining hall is no longer just part of a routine. It's imbued with this extra layer of meaning, accompanied by the dull ache of knowing that our time together this way is coming to an end.

Yet the other side of that coin is love. A tutor in Winthrop, Mike, once told me that there is no grieving without love. That every time you grieve it's because you've lost something you love. I've grown to be quite grateful for this confusing, paradoxical aspect of the world. That I can mourn the end of my time here and simultaneously embrace my future adventures. That I can deeply know and unabashedly love the wonderful people here while accepting that our time together is fleeting. College has taught me a lot about living in this strange world. I made a friend in one of my classes this semester, Frank, who invited me to his jazz performance last week as a senior project at the Divinity School. There he spoke about how one way of living with grief is to be in the present moment, to praise it, something he's able to do through jazz.

I found the performance to be one of the most moving experiences I've had during my time here. The setting the sun was shining through the glass windows of the chapel and being in that present moment meant being in a community with all the other audience members, all with their own unique experiences of love and loss. To the sound of Frank's soulful performance, that chapel became space for all of us to hold our grief together, a space that embraced joy and sorrow and everything in between. That's the biggest lesson I'm taking with me. I'm learning how to live with uncertainty and non-duality, that our world is messy and broken, yet also beautiful and life-affirming. That when a forest burns, new seeds can spread. That I can be both happy and sad about leaving college and grateful for the richness of the experiences I've had here. And as my time here comes to an end, I'm so grateful to have so much to mourn. Thank you.

Harriett Lindeman:

Please join me in prayer. Creator God, be with us through this time of beginnings and endings, through the loss and grief and fear woven into our lives here on campus and beyond. Guide us in love, in light and joy as we navigate a world always in motion and find our way step by step. In your name we pray, amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Harriett Lindeman:

Now let us pray as Jesus taught his disciples saying our father who art 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 to evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Please rise in body and spirit as we sing Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee, number 23.

Congregation:

Joyful, joyful, we adore You, God of glory, Lord of love.

Hearts unfold like flow'rs before You, Praising Thee, the sun above.

Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the dark of doubt away.

Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.

All Thy works with joy sur-round Thee, Earth and Heav'n re-flect Thy rays.

Stars and an-gels sing around Thee, center of unbroken praise.

Field and for-est, vale and mount-ain, blooming mea-dow, flash-ing sea.

Chanting bird and flow-ing foun-tain, call us to re-joice in Thee.

Thou art giv-ing and for-giv-ing, ever bless-ing, ev-er blest.

Well-spring of the joy of liv-ing, ocean-depth of hap-py rest!

Thou our Fa-ther, Christ our bro-ther, all who live in love are Thine.

Teach us how to love each oth-er, lift us to the joy di-vine.

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 be in your soul. Go in peace and justice. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.