

Steph Grassano:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Morning.

Steph Grassano:

And welcome to morning prayers. Our speaker this morning will be Michael Fuhrman. He's a second year Master of Divinity student at Harvard Divinity School. Our service will begin this morning with a responsive reading of Psalm 105. Please rise in body or spirit as we read the psalm responsively by whole verse.

We give you thanks, oh God, and call upon your name. We make known your deeds among the peoples.

Congregation:

We sing to you, we sing your praise and speak of all your commands to us.

Steph Grassano:

We glory in your holy name. Let the hearts of those who seek you rejoice.

Congregation:

We search for you and your strength. We continue to seek your face.

Steph Grassano:

You spread out a cloud for a covering and a fire to give light in the night season.

Congregation:

You opened the rock and the water flowed so the river ran in the dry places.

Steph Grassano:

For you remembered your holy word and Abraham your servant.

Congregation:

So therefore your people were blessed. You were chosen with shouts of joy.

Steph Grassano:

You gave your people the lands of the nations, and they took the fruit of others' toil.

Congregation:

That they might keep your statutes and observe your laws. Hallelujah.

Choir:

(Singing).

Michael Fuhrman:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Morning.

Michael Fuhrman:

Today I would like to share with you all a brief poem by the Arkansas poet Frank Stanford. This is The Minnow. "If I press on its head, the eyes will come out like stars. The ripples it makes can move the moon."

I'd like to invite you all to join me on a quick journey to the duck woods of the Black River in Northeast Arkansas where a young boy joins his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather on an early morning, bundled up in various amounts of warm winter wear, all enveloped in camo waders, one size too large.

After a winding boat ride on a mist filled river and a series of falling in and out of sleep, we found ourselves in a cove, waist deep in the water.

My forefathers had great ambitions that morning of a bountiful hunt, and excited by the opportunity to teach the youngest generation something about the place of man in nature and some secrets of the sport, such as the common practice to take the bodies of the hunted ducks and lay them out to dry on a sturdy limb and keep their bodies out of the water. Or the common practice to take the child who won't stop complaining about how cold the water is and sit him on the same branch.

There I was sitting dry on the branch next to what was becoming a successful hunt. In the midst of a patient silence, my father turns to check on me and can't help but let out a belly laugh. With one gentle finger, there I sat slowly petting the soft feathery heads of the recently deceased mallards. I can only guess that wasn't the first time my dad figured I wasn't destined to become a master hunter.

I tell this story because I would like to tell you all about what I call the efforts of the smallest. The smallest being the minnow, the mallard, or even a sparrow taking a dust bath in the tree beds of our Cambridge sidewalks and the efforts being their lives, the lives of all of our mice and spiders and pigeons.

I can't help but imagine that time moves slower for them, some way to prolong their already short lives as they flutter and scurry and swim around us. That somehow they know that they have less time, and because of this clinging tighter to every moment passing us by. A testament that no life is too short.

Now, I'll admit that this might be wishful thinking, but I like to imagine they're trying to teach us something about how we live our lives, our tiny saints. That every time I hear a bird sing, I'm reminded to recognize the moment I'm in. That every time I watch a mouse sprint across the sidewalk, I'm being asked to take stock of my own life. Every time, I can't help but feel grateful.

My hope for everyone this morning is that as we live our days, we take notice of the efforts of the smallest. That as they tend to their lives, we tend to ours. That it is not what we do with our time, but how we care for it, that makes the difference. Notice that as Stanford writes, "Even the smallest ripples can move the moon."

If you haven't guessed, I indeed did not grow up to be a master hunter, but I have to thank my fathers in addition to the ducks for lessons in laughter. Thank you all for your time this morning. Thank you.

Steph Grassano:

Will you pray with me? Loving God, we thank you for all of your creation from the smallest beings to the biggest mountains and rivers, and we thank you for the ways your creation teaches us, teaches us to inhabit each moment with gratitude and with holy attention, savoring the time that we have here, however long or short. We give thanks to you this day for this a blessed intention and for our ability to be present. Amen.

Together let us pray, as Jesus taught his disciples. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by 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.

Let us rise in body or spirit to sing hymn 343 in your crimson Harvard hymnal.

Choir:

(Singing).

Steph Grassano:

As we go into this day, may we remember that in the goodness of God, we were born into this world. By the grace of God, we've been kept all the day long, even unto this very hour. By the love of God, we are being made whole. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.