

Wes Conn: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Wes Conn: Welcome to morning prayers. We'll begin today's service with a responsive reading from the Black Appleton Chapel Psalter book, Psalm selection number 93, found on page 47. Please stand as you are able.

Wes Conn: The Lord is King, he is robed in grandeur; The Lord is robed, He is girded with strength.

Congregation: The world stands firm; it cannot be shaken.

Wes Conn: Your throne stands firm from of old; from eternity you have existed.

Congregation: The ocean sounds, O Lord, the ocean sounds its thunder; the ocean sounds its pounding.

Wes Conn: Above the thunder of the almighty waters, more majestic than the breakers of the sea is the Lord, majestic on high.

Congregation: Your decrees are indeed enduring; holiness befits your house, O Lord, for all times.

Wes Conn: You may take your seats.

Choir: Singing

Ali Asani: Our text for today is the opening chapter of the Koran, which I will first recite, or say it in English and then reciting Arabic. In the name of God, the compassion, the merciful. All praises to God, the maintainer for the world. You alone we worship and you alone we seek support. Guide us to the right path, the path of those whom you have bestowed favors. Nor of those cursed ones, nor of those who are astray. (Arabic translation singing.)

Ali Asani: To God belongs to east and to west. Wherever you turn, there is the face of God. Indeed, God is all embracing and all knowing. Koran Chapter 2 Verse 115. This verse from the Koran, along with the same attribute into the prophet Mohammed, God is beautiful and loves beauty. I focus of my reflection on beauty this morning. There are many forms of beauty just as they are many forms of hate, intolerance and bigotry. We live in a world obsessed by perceived and accepted forms of what is beautiful and what is not. Indeed, not everyone sees beauty in exactly the same way. As we all know, from hidden treasures discovered in nature, beauty can sometimes be disguised, misleading, veiled, and even terrifying. There are those of, there are those who enjoy sunny days

best, but there are, there are also those called pluvial files who enjoy rain, tender, enlightenment over anything the sun may offer.

Ali Asani: To them, gray and rainy days are beautiful and welcoming, intimate and deeply spiritual. Indeed, as is stated in the Koran, all of creation as a manifestation of the divine is beautiful, even in the face of our own partialities. Can any of us imagine such a static world, where there can be only one form of anything, especially beauty. We are all different for a reason and for a purpose. We all have had our contributions to make, if only we are given the freedom and allow others to explore the same freedom. Freedom itself is beautiful. Tolerance of that freedom, even more so. And yet we are not, it seems, as concerned by the inner core of ourselves or of anything. Provided it fits appropriately into the world view mold generally accepted as being pleasing to the eye. The Koran tells us that everything perishes except the face of God.

Ali Asani: Chapter 28 Verse 88. Thus in Islam little importance is placed on physical beauty, because it does not last. As humans, we are meant to look deeper into what constitutes real and enduring beauty. We should seek to cultivate inner beauty so that it mirrors divine beauty and allows our souls to be nourished by. We must remember that physical forms are temporary, so is our narrow mindedness. Nothing can ever be considered truly beautiful that violates the wellbeing, trust, respect, and acceptance of all of God's work has manifest in his creation. We learn at a very early age that we should not judge a book by its cover. In doing so, we may miss out on a great adventure within the books pages. A search for beauty in all of its many and varied manifestation is an essence a search for God and the meaning of existence. God is the ultimate source of beauty and beauty is the truest manifestation of divine love itself.

Wes Conn: Please join me in praying together the Lord's prayer found on the reverse of your order of worship. 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 forever and ever. Amen. Let us sing together the hymn As Pants the Hart for Cooling Streams, number 303 in your Crimson hymnal. Please stand as you are capable.

Congregation: Singing

Wes Conn: Perceive now these good words. May the Lord keep you from evil and may the Lord keep you in your going out and in your coming in from this time on and forevermore. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.