

Lara Glass: Good morning. Please stand as you are able or responsive reading from your black Appleton salter Psalm number 118 found on page 59.

Lara Glass: Praise the Lord. For He is good. His steadfast love is eternal.

Congregation: Let Israel declare, "His steadfast love is eternal."

Lara Glass: Let the house of Aaron declare his steadfast love is eternal.

Congregation: Let those who fear the Lord declare. His steadfast love is eternal.

Lara Glass: In distress I called on the Lord. The Lord answered me and brought me relief.

Congregation: The Lord is on my side I have no fear; what can man do to me?

Lara Glass: Open the gates of victory for me that I may enter them and praise the Lord.

Congregation: This is the gateway to the Lord, the righteous shall enter through it.

Lara Glass: I praise you for you have answered me and have become my deliverance.

Congregation: The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

Lara Glass: This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our sight.

Congregation: This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us exalt and rejoice in it

Lara Glass: You may be seated.

Choir: Singing

Teju Cole: Good morning. A loaning is a path, an uncultivated space between two fields. It is an Irish word, not an English one. I would like to begin by reading a poem by Seamus Heaney titled *In A Loaning*. Heaney was a professor in the English Department here from 1981 until 2006. He died in 2013. In A Loaning.

Teju Cole: Spoken for in autumn. Recovered speech having its way again, I gave a cry: "Not beechen green, but these shin-deep coffers of copper-fired leaves. These beech boles, grey."

Teju Cole: Published in 2005, *In A Loaning* has only four lines in pentameter, but is impressively dense. I was dazzled when I first encountered it. The beech and beechen are: B E E C H as of the tree, a bole: B O L E is a tree trunk which will possibly have reminded you of the extraordinary mystical unity evoked in the final lines of Yates's Among Schoolchildren.

- Teju Cole: O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer, Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole? O body swayed to music, O brightening glance, How can we know the dancer from the dance?
- Teju Cole: The Yatesean lines, part of a longer poem are dense in their own way, but they're not so compressed as Heaney's *In A Loaning*. He is thinking about this time of year, September, October, and walking in the fallen leaves. He calls them shin-deep coffers because those golden leaves remind him of wading in treasure. The beech trunks are grey, but the leaves are copper-fired. There is elation here like that of a child at play.
- Teju Cole: Poetry is a consolation in complexity. Too often, we want a poetic line that sounds pretty and gives a past lesson. But poetry is charge is precisely in its being equal to the intensity of experience. It its resistance to summary and in its invitation to re-visitation. The poem-ness of this one is in the slant rhyme of cry and grey. The way coffers ghosts its way into copper-fired leaves. The masterly assonance of that extrovert 'E' in speech, beechen, green, deep, leaves, beech. Spoken for an autumn recovered speech having its way again, I gave a cry. When was the speech lost? I think the answer is in an earlier poem of he's titled *The Loaning*, which appeared in 1981. That 17 line poem begins: 'As I went down the loaning in the fields, the wind shifting in the hedge was like an old one's whistling speech. I knew that I was in the limbo of lost words.'
- Teju Cole: Years after this andante-esque, dumbfoundedness, alone in full of autumn leaves not green is a marvel to the poet. His tongue is loosed. He gives a cry. But there is a paradox too. Everyone knows what it means when leaves turn from green to gold. It means they are dying. The crypt word of those coffers is coffins. And as specific as loaning might be to Heaney's Ulster dialect, perhaps it might remind us too that we live on borrowed time. I think the eloquence of fall, the bloom of late life, the astonishing energy of that which is dying, help us negotiate our losses. Language is alert to the efflorescence that can accompany mortality. Observers of nature know that resurrection is part of its promise. Though it is unlikely to be a personal resurrection. The leaves that die in September are not the same leaves that will emerge in May and June. But the season, if we attend to it, takes us out of the limbo of lost words into the cry of recovered speech.
- Teju Cole: I think of a friend who died earlier this month. A young man. And how much living he put into his dying. He traveled, he swam in the ocean, he took great pleasure in fabulous meals. He produced serious scholarship. He's gone now. But what a gift he gave us simply by demonstrating what life was worth. Here again is *In A Loaning*:
- Teju Cole: Spoken for in autumn. Recovered speech having its way again, I gave a cry: "Not beechen green, but these shin-deep coffers of copper-fired leaves. These beech boles, grey."

Teju Cole: A Loaming, as I said at the beginning, is a path, an uncultivated space between two cultivated fields. As we proceed this morning into the duties that press on us from all sides, let us be reminded of the complexity of uncultivated spaces. The late ripenings that contain both gold and gray, and the consolations of evanescent treasure.

Lara Glass: Please join me in offering the Lord's prayer, printed on the reverse of your order of worship.

Lara Glass: 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. Amen.

Lara Glass: Please stand as you are able to sing hymn number 331: Love is Kind and Suffers Long. In your Crimson Memorial Church Hymnal number 331.

Congregation: Singing.

Lara Glass: As we close, I offer the words of John O'Donoghue:

Lara Glass: May We live this day, compassionate of heart, clear in word, gracious in awareness, courageous in thought, and generous in love. Amen.