

Westley Conn: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Westley 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 64, found on page 32. Please stand as you are able.

Westley Conn: Hear my voice, Oh God, and my complaint. Preserve my life from the dread enemy.

Congregation: Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the scheming of the evildoers.

Westley Conn: Who whet their tongues like swords, who aim bitter words like arrows.

Congregation: Shooting from ambush at the blameless. They shoot suddenly and without fear.

Westley Conn: They hold fast to their evil purpose. They talk of laying snares and secretly thinking who can see us?

Congregation: Who can search out our crimes? We have thought out a cunningly conceived plot. For the human heart and mind are deeper.

Westley Conn: But God will shoot His arrow at them. They will be wounded suddenly.

Congregation: Because of their tongue, he will bring them to ruin; all who see them will shake with horror.

Westley Conn: Then everyone will fear. They will tell what God has brought about and ponder, what He has done.

Congregation: Let the righteous rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in Him. Let all the upright in heart glory.

Westley Conn: You may take your seat.

Choir: (singing)

Jarred Batchelor-Hamilton: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Jarred Batchelor-Hamilton: The author of Psalm 70:1 writes, "Make haste oh Lord, to deliver me. Make haste to help me, oh God." Think of a time when you had called out for help. Maybe things were hard for you financially or mentally and you had called for

help to God, to a friend, or maybe to no one in particular and maybe help came to your defense immediately. Maybe not. But the speech act of simply saying the word help through feelings of anxiety and doubt provided just a second of relief. In my case, I want to say it might have been my third week of Harvard and I called my mom crying saying I had made a mistake coming here. I had only taken three religious studies classes in my undergrad and I was a first gen graduate student at an institution whose wealth and status I had not yet come to grasp, but was suddenly benefiting from.

Jarred Batchelor-Hamilton: After I had railed off my list of how unprepared I was, my mom, so kindly asked a series of questions that still play in the back of my head. "Have you asked God for help? Isn't this what you wanted? Isn't this what you had prayed for?" And in a half joking chuckle I said, "I mean, yeah, but not like this." And I just want to be clear, I'm not talking about meaningless suffering due to systemic injustice, but rather what does it mean to be in a place that you have prayed and hoped and worked hard to be in, just to finally get there and all you experience is your unreadiness. Suffering from what people here know so well, a little thing called imposter syndrome. Her questions had compelled me to realize that God had indeed answered my prayers. I wanted to get into a master's program. I wanted to study something I enjoy and I want it to go to Harvard. But her questions also compelled me to confront my feelings of being unprepared to handle the blessing that I had asked for.

Jarred Batchelor-Hamilton: Should I have prayed for something smaller, maybe something a bit more in my control. Did I say too big of a prayer? Had I so easily fallen into the elite misconception that I had gotten here on my own and I would only succeed with my own strength? Had I forgotten the ability of my creator so quickly? My mom had reminded me that God is way much bigger than Harvard. And if I was looking at Harvard or any school for joy, I would never find it. Trying to take her advice, I began to ask God for help for the smallest things. A silent, help me please, as I walked toward campus, a deep breath here and a ugh there that communicated my chorus of please. This acknowledgement, this gratitude has not only improved my time at Harvard, but has allowed me to develop a relationship with God that was only surface level before I came here and maybe that was the reason I was brought here to acquire something more than just my master's degree.

Jarred Batchelor-Hamilton: If a plea is a form of praise, then yes, I want to be in a space that forces me to plead to my creator. My battles in this place then have become avenues by which I worship and give thanks because y'all, I ask for help every single day. My requests of aid are loud and silent, active and contemplative, but my God hears every single one of them. Sometimes we are really bad at just asking for help. Sometimes we forget that we don't have to carry our problems and burdens alone, especially graduate students. Sometimes we forget that we are only human and that we each have a breaking point that we must acknowledge. Sometimes we sit in our loneliness and our helplessness because it's what we

think that we deserve. We say to ourselves, "If I can't get myself out of this pit, I don't deserve to get out."

Jarred Batchelor-Hamilton: This is false. I reject this and I encourage you to do as well. Develop your own course of pleas because a plea is just prayer and praise. Despite all I've said, my good friend, Cassian, a fourth century monk and Saint sums it up perfectly in his tenth conference, saying "Psalm 70 carries within it all the feelings of which human nature is capable. It can be adapted to every condition and can be usefully deployed against every temptation. It carries within it a cry of help to guide in the face of every danger, expressing the humility of a pious confession and conveying the watchfulness of unending worry and fear. Psalm 70 conveys a sense of our frailty, the assurance of being heard, a help that is always and everywhere present. Psalm 70 is the voice of ardor and charity. This verse keeps us." This verse keeps me from despairing since it reveals to me the one to whom I call, Oh God, make haste to deliver me. Make haste to help me, oh God. Thank you.

Westley Conn: Will you pray with me? Oh God, you are our help. Hear us, come quickly. Give us your aid. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.

Westley Conn: Please join me in the words of 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.

Westley Conn: Let us sing together the hymn, "We come unto our peoples, God", number 265 in your crimson Harvard hymnal. Please stand as you are able.

Congregation: (Singing)

Westley Conn: Before offering the benediction, I want to invite you to join us following the service at Mem Cafe and the lower level of the church for coffee, tea, and conversation. Now receive 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.