

Wes Conn: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Wes Conn: Welcome to morning prayers. We'll begin today's service with the responsive reading from the black Appleton Chapel Psalter Book, Psalm selection number 104 found on page 52. Please stand as you are able. Bless the Lord, oh my soul. Oh Lord my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty.

Congregation: Wrapped in light as with a garment, you stretch out the heavens like a tent.

Wes Conn: You set the beams of your chambers on the waters. You make the clouds your chariot. You ride on the wings of the wind.

Congregation: You make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers.

Wes Conn: You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken.

Congregation: You cover it with the deep as with a garment. The waters stood above the mountains.

Wes Conn: At your rebuke they flee. At the sound of your thunder they take to flight.

Congregation: They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys, to the place that you appointed for them.

Wes Conn: May the glory of the Lord endure forever. May the Lord rejoice in His works.

Congregation: Who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke.

Wes Conn: You may take your seats.

Choir: (Singing)

Grace Killian: The inspired text I'd like to share with you this morning is the poem entitled Love Letter by Madeline L'Engle. I hate you God. Love, Madeline. I write my message on water and at bedtime I tiptoe upstairs and let it flow under your door. When I am angry with you I know that you are there even if you do not answer my knock, even when your butler opens the door an inch and slaps his thousand wings in annoyance at such untoward interruption and says that the Master is not at home. I love you Madeline. Hate God.

Grace Killian: This is how I treat my friends you said to one great saint. "No wonder you have so few of them, Lord," she replied. I cannot turn the other cheek. It takes all the strength I have to keep my fist from hitting back. The soldier shot the baby, the

little boys trampled the old woman, the gutters are filled with groans while pleasure seekers knock each other down in order to get their tickets stamped first. I'm turning in my ticket, and my letter of introduction. You're supposed to do the knocking. Why do you burst my heart? How can I write you to tell you that I'm angry when I've been given the wrong address and I don't even know your real name. I take hammer and nails and tack my message on two crossed pieces of wood. Dear God, is it too much to ask you to bother to be? Just show your hindquarters and let me hear you roar. Love, Madeline.

Grace Killian: In my first week at Harvard Divinity School my father was rushed to the hospital with kidney failure and started emergency dialysis. We were told that regular dialysis would give him an extra year or so of life, and so in the spring semester of my second year of graduate school my father passed away. Shortly before his passing my mother had given me Madeline L'Engle's book of poems, *The Weather of the Heart* in which her poem *Love Letter* is found. In the last several months of my father's life I carried this book of poems with me back and forth between Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where my parents lived and here in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I made my way through these poems again and again. I read them before bed, on planes, and by my father's bedside in the last days of his life. The wrestling with suffering chaos, doubts, and questions, as exemplified in this poem, made sense to me in the ways most things did not. These poems gave words to my own wrestling with loss and the continued faith in a supposedly good God.

Grace Killian: Throughout my life my father was dangerously ill more often than he was healthy. He was often compared to Job, the biblical character whose faith was tested by immense suffering. At the end of the story of Job, Job does not shy away from questioning God. He demands to know where God is so he can demand an explanation. He accuses God of being unjust, violent, and cruel. L'Engle's poem sounds a lot like the accusation Job throws at God, for L'Engle, too, questions God. Her poem addresses the great deal of suffering and chaos in our own lives and in the world today. Her poem offers no answers but ends with a question. Is it too much to expect you to be? God's response to Job demonstrates that no, it is not too much to ask God to be, to roar even, for God hears Job's cries of grief and pain and comes to Job in a great wild whirlwind. While God does show up and address Job's questions there are no answers offered.

Grace Killian: Job has asked God some pretty specific questions about why humans suffer and the existence of justice. So while it seems that God was simply evading these questions the answer itself is hidden within the lack of an answer. L'Engle's poem and the story of Job may not tell us why suffering happens but they do tell us that God cares about our grief, pain, and anger. Job is not punished for his angry, demanding words to God. In fact, God shows up. God deems Job's anger worthy of attention, worthy of God's awesome presence, and while God offers no clear answers God enters into a dialogue with Job. Like Job we can bring our concerns to God in all of their messiness. God does not only want our

thanks, or our emotions that we have cleaned up to bring to God in prayer, but also welcomes our despair, confusion, loss, and anger. Neither do we have to go searching for God, seeking out the Divine presence somewhere set apart, for God is already present in the storm of grief and pain.

Wes Conn: Please join me in offering the words of the Lord's Prayer found in 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.

Wes Conn: Let us sing together the hymn Call Jehovah Thy Salvation, number 290 in your crimson Harvard Hymnal. Please stand as you are able.

Congregation: (Singing)

Wes Conn: Receive now this benediction, Nay the Lord keep you from evil and may the Lord keep you in you're going out and in you're coming in from this time on forevermore. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.