

Grace Killian: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Grace Killian: Welcome to morning prayers. Our responsive psalm this morning comes from Psalm number 10 in your Black Appleton Psalter. Will you please stand?

Grace Killian: Why do you stand so far off, O God, and hide yourself in time of trouble?

Congregation: The wicked arrogantly persecute the poor, but they are trapped in the schemes they have devised.

Grace Killian: The wicked boast of their heart's desire. The covetous curse and revile God.

Congregation: The wicked are so proud, they care not for God. Their only thought is, "God does not matter."

Grace Killian: Their ways are devious at all times. Their judgments are far above out of their sight. They defy all their enemies.

Congregation: They say in their heart, "I shall not be shaken. No harm shall happen to me ever."

Grace Killian: Arise, O Lord, punish the wicked, O God. Do not ignore the helpless.

Congregation: Rise up, O Holy One, lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the afflicted.

Grace Killian: Why should the wicked revile God? Why should they say in their heart, "You do not care."

Congregation: Surely, we hold trouble and misery. You see it and take it into your own hand.

Choir: (singing).

Stephanie Paulsell: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Stephanie Paulsell: A reading from the letters of Etty Hillesum, written on September 7th, 1943:

Stephanie Paulsell: "Christine, opening the Bible at random, I find this: "The Lord is my high tower." I am sitting on my rucksack in the middle of a full freight car. Father, Mother and Mischa are a few cars away. In the end, the departure came without warning. On sudden special orders from The Hague. We left the camp singing, Father and Mother, firmly and calmly, Mischa, too. We shall be traveling for three days. Thank you for all your kindness and care. Friends left behind will still be writing

to Amsterdam, perhaps you will hear something from them. Or from my last letter from camp. Goodbye for now from the four of us. -Etty."

- Stephanie Paulsell: Etty Hillesum was the author of an extraordinary journal in which she recorded both the terrors of the Nazi occupation of Amsterdam and she own deepening spiritual life. She wrote the letter I've just read on a postcard and threw it out of the window the freight train that took her and her family to Auschwitz. The card was found by some farmers and posted eight days after she wrote it.
- Stephanie Paulsell: Etty Hillesum was a person of tremendous energy and creativity, alive to the world around her and within her, to whom others were drawn in love and friendship, around whom community took shape. She was the kind of person the world needs in every age and in every time and place. She died in Auschwitz on November 30th, 1943 at the age of 29.
- Stephanie Paulsell: Today is Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, and the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the camp where Etty Hillesum was murdered along with more than a million others, mostly Jews like her. Today is a day to remember the past and mourn the incalculable losses inflicted on our world by the Nazi regime, but also a day to take stock of the present.
- Stephanie Paulsell: We are living in a time of rising violence against Jewish communities. The Tree of Life Synagogue and the attack on the Rabbi's house in Monsey, New York being only the most well-known of a startling number of such acts over the last few years.
- Stephanie Paulsell: I think we've all wondered at some point how we would have responded in times like Etty Hillesum's. Would we have resisted the destruction of norms and the rising violence then? Are we resisting now? What is the distance between where they were and where we are as violence against Jewish communities increases, when neo-Nazis march in our cities, when students with visas get turned away from our country at the airport and sent back to where they came from with no explanation?
- Stephanie Paulsell: One of the most haunting lines in Etty Hillesum's postcard is this: "In the end, the departure came without warning." The terrors of history often happen suddenly, or they seem to. It's probably more accurate to say that they happen out of public view for a while, affecting the most vulnerable, and then they escalate.
- Stephanie Paulsell: The historian of authoritarian regimes, Timothy Snyder, worries that Americans have seen liberal democracy as our inevitable future for so long that we are unprepared to respond to the possibility of an authoritarian future. "It's not enough to believe that all will be well," he insists, "We have to practice shaping a society we want and resisting the kind of society we do not."

- Stephanie Paulsell: Some of the practices Snyder recommends are grounded in the public sphere: Defend institutions, be active in voluntary organizations, don't obey in advance. Other practices of resistance are grounded in private life. For example, he urges us to make eye contact and small talk with the people we encounter in the course of our daily lives, "Because in all the places where tyranny has emerged," he notes, "What the people who survived remember years later is how their neighbors treated them. When people under threat saw their neighbors averting their eyes or crossing the street to avoid meeting, they felt more afraid. And with good reason because someone who is isolated in society is easier for an authoritarian regime to harm than someone who is known and seen and held in community."
- Stephanie Paulsell: Hannah Arendt taught that tyranny is marked by the destruction of the boundaries between public and private life, making a cultivation of a robust private life an act of resistance and a source of our ability to act in the public sphere. Snyder urges us to go to places we've never been before, make new friends and enlarge our community, to resist expressing ourselves with the slogans and phrases that everyone else is using, even those with whom we agree, and to cultivate fresh ways of saying what we mean. "Read fiction, read the Bible, read history," he says, "And think with them about the world in which we're living. And," he writes, "be as courageous as you can."
- Stephanie Paulsell: These are spiritual practices grounded in attention to what is happening around us and inside us. As Etty Hillesum's own life shows, a rich inner life combined with life in community can help keep us connected to our convictions. Simply understanding ourselves to believe one thing or another will almost certainly not be enough to stay true to those beliefs. We need communities in which to practice our commitments, keeping them alive and accessible.
- Stephanie Paulsell: A university could be such a community, a church too. Etty Hillesum flung her postcard from the train to Auschwitz like a message in a bottle. To be able to read it today in 2020 is a blessing and a challenge. Let's look around as she did to find others with whom to practice being the people and the society we hope to become.
- Stephanie Paulsell: Let us pray. O God, on this day of remembrance, we mourn the lives lost in the catastrophe of the Holocaust and grieve all that we might have learned, all whom we might have loved, all that might have come to life in this world. It is a loss we cannot measure.
- Stephanie Paulsell: We pray for the courage to remain turned toward the world you made and called good, to remain turned toward one another, holy committed to protecting and cherishing the dignity of the humanity we share with every person on earth. Be with us, O God, amen.
- Congregation: Amen.

Stephanie Paulsell: Would you join me in the Lord's Prayer, printed on the back of the Order of Service?

Stephanie Paulsell: Our Father-

Congregation: ... 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. Amen.

Stephanie Paulsell: Would you please stand for our closing hymn number 203, Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise?

Choir/Congregation: (singing).

Grace Killian: Now, go in peace with the grace of God, challenged by the word we heard this morning. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.