

Grace Killian: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Grace Killian: Welcome to morning prayers. Our responsive reading this morning is Psalm 16, found in your black Appleton psalter. Will you please stand? Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust.

Congregation: O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord. My grace extendeth not to thee...

Grace Killian: But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.

Congregation: Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god. Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

Grace Killian: The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup. Thou maintainest my lot.

Congregation: The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places. Yea, I have a goodly heritage.

Grace Killian: I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel. My reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

Congregation: I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Grace Killian: Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth. My flesh also shall rest in hope.

Congregation: For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell. Neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.

Choir: (singing)

Arthur Brooks: Good morning, friends.

Congregation: Good morning.

Arthur Brooks: Thank you to our choir for the beautiful music, and for the entrance music that we enjoyed of Bach. I'd like to start this day with the words of Saint Matthew, the fifth chapter, verses 43 through 45. "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy,' but I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven."

Arthur Brooks: We all know, in our ordinary lives, that when there's a big problem that won't go away, the solution never comes from thinking harder in the old ways. We have to think differently. We need an epiphany. We need a breakthrough. What I'd like to offer you today is the idea that Jesus' words in this Scripture are just the epiphany that we need today in response to a big problem in our lives, in our society, in our world, and indeed on our campus. That problem is our inability to listen and to respect those with whom we disagree ideologically.

Arthur Brooks: This is a problem all over the world. It's a problem in our politics. Turn on the television, and you see it. If you turn on... If you look at social media, it's there. You'll see it all around you. As I mentioned, just before, indeed right here at Harvard. We're being ripped apart, not by anger toward one another, but rather by contempt, which is the conviction that the people who disagree with us are not just wrong, but worthless.

Arthur Brooks: I make my living as a social scientist, and I could give you proof that polarization across ideological lines is worse now than it's been in at least a century, but you don't need my proof. You see it in your lives. You hear it in the voices of your friends. You see it on television. You see it everywhere.

Arthur Brooks: What's the solution? What can we do? What can I do? What can I do to create unity where there's division?

Arthur Brooks: Actually, let me back up for two seconds and address something that you might be thinking, which is you might disagree with my whole premise. Maybe you're thinking, some people deserve my contempt. They're so wrong, they are worthless. If that's how you feel, let me ask you in response, what's your goal when you disagree with someone? Is it to harm them? Is it to exile them? Is it to force somebody to agree with you? Probably not, because you can't force somebody to agree with you. Since you can't, your only alternative in this world is to persuade others, to convince them how to change the way they act and they think. Contempt, hatred, never does the trick. Remember, nobody in the world in history, has ever been insulted into agreement.

Arthur Brooks: What should we do instead? That takes us back to the Scripture that I started with today. "Love your enemies." Notice that Jesus doesn't ask us for greater civility or tolerance. Why not? Because those are terrible standards. If I told you that my wife, Esther, and I were civil to each other, you'd say that we need counseling.

Arthur Brooks: Jesus doesn't say tolerate your enemies, because that's not good enough. He said to love your enemies. Of course, the devil's in the details, isn't it? How do you do that? I want to suggest three things. This is your homework.

Arthur Brooks: First, ask God to give each of us the strength to do this hard thing, to go against human nature, to follow Jesus' subversive teaching to love our enemies. Ask

God to remove contempt from our hearts. If that's too hard in your weakest moment, maybe ask God to help you to fake it.

Arthur Brooks: Second, make a commitment to someone else to reject contempt. Have someone hold you accountable. Maybe do it in public. Of course, you're going to disagree with others. That's good. That's what it means to be a member of this community, is to disagree in a competition of ideas. That's right. That's part of democracy, but commit to doing it without hatred, and ask someone publicly to hold you accountable.

Arthur Brooks: Third, go out looking for contempt of others, so you can answer it with love. The reason that you feel contempt, very often, is because people express contempt toward you. I know it sounds crazy to go out looking for it, because it's something bad, but contempt, hatred, is not like the flu, where you should avoid it at all costs. It's actually an opportunity for you to share your values and to change the world. This is the idea of a missionary, isn't it?

Arthur Brooks: I have missionaries on both sides of my family. It's a funny thing that they face so much rejection, because they give a countercultural message, and yet they're full of joy. Think how much rejection a missionary faces. You know the words that have never been uttered? Oh good, there's missionaries on the porch. Never. Pretend we're not home. Yet, they're full of joy, because they're bringing light where there's darkness.

Arthur Brooks: Look, if we love our enemies, the next time we face ideological opposition, we will be like missionaries in a secular way. Those are the three things I'd like you to think about today. Ask God to give you strength. Make a commitment to others. And go looking for contempt, because it's your opportunity to express the Gospel. As I finish, please pray with me, as we go out and start our day.

Arthur Brooks: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us this day to glorify You and to sanctify our work by serving others. We ask that today we stay awake to the opportunity to answer contempt with kindness, to love our enemies, in Jesus' words. In so doing, we will reflect Your goodness in our lives, and destroy the illusion that they were our enemies in the first place. Use us as joyful missionaries for peace and reconciliation in a world of conflict. In Your name we pray, amen.

Arthur Brooks: Join me in the Lord's prayer.

All Present: 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 debts/trespases, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Congregation: For thine is the kingdom and the...

All Present: Power and the glory forever, amen.

Arthur Brooks:        Enjoy this beautiful day.