

Lara Glass: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Lara Glass: Welcome to morning prayers. Please stand as you are able for a responsive reading from your black Appleton psalter. Psalm number 154, found on page 78.

Lara Glass: Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that obtaineth understanding.

Congregation: For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

Lara Glass: She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

Congregation: Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches are and honor.

Lara Glass: Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

Congregation: She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that holdest her fast.

Lara Glass: The Lord by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding established the heavens.

Congregation: By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the skies drop down the dew.

Lara Glass: My son, let not them depart from thine eyes, keep sound wisdom and discretion.

Congregation: So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.

Lara Glass: Then shalt thou walk in thy way securely, and thou shalt not dash thy foot.

Congregation: When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid, yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

Lara Glass: Be not afraid of sudden terror, neither of the destruction of the wicked, when it cometh.

Congregation: For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and will keep thy foot from being caught.

Lara Glass: You may be seated.

Choir: (singing)

Caroline Light: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Caroline Light: I'd like to share an excerpt from James Elkins' "The Object Stares Back." In it, Elkins asks us to consider vision not as a simple or a straightforward physical capacity, nor as the opposite of blindness. Elkins writes, "Because we cannot see what we do not understand, or use, or identify with, we see very little of the world, only the small pieces that are useful and harmless. Each act of vision mingles seeing with not seeing, so that vision can become less a way of gathering information than avoiding it."

Caroline Light: These are provocative claims. For Elkins, an art historian, human eyes are designed to see only partially. To see is also not to see. Our vision is always preferential, incomplete, a line of defense against fully embracing that which is uncomfortable and destabilizing, that which renders us vulnerable. Today, I don't take my vision for granted. I've reached the age where my eyesight feels tenuous. I strain sometimes to read the words on the tiny newsfeed on my iPhone, and to decipher the expressions on the faces of people as they approach from a distance.

Caroline Light: Perhaps more now than ever, I'm aware of my vision's fallibility, my partial and frail capacity to see, to bear witness. My friend and colleague, Susanna Siegel, is a philosopher who studies the ways in which we perceive, and how those perceptions are structured by the fears, the hopes, the suspicions, the understandings of the world that we carry with us, sometimes without even knowing it. Our often unacknowledged biases and phobias, our social locations, our relationships to power all are integral to the ways we perceive the world and others around us.

Caroline Light: Perhaps an ethical appeal to vision is to acknowledge the discomfort of our messy embodiedness, our impartiality and embeddedness. To see those things or people with whom we don't identify is also to struggle with and to reflect on our limitations, physical and epistemic, and ultimately to allow ourselves to be transformed. Today, I want to offer two short prayers in Hebrew, along with their English translations.

Caroline Light: First. Praised are you Adonai, sovereign spirit who opens the eyes of the blind. And the second I want to offer my favorite prayers, the Modeh Ani, a prayer of gratitude usually offered every morning. The rough translation is thank you, living and enduring spirit, for the miracle of this day. You have graciously returned my soul within me. Great is your faithfulness. This is a prayer of gratitude, one that thanks God for the miracle of the new day, and also the capacity to surrender oneself fully to the gaze of the other.

Caroline Light: It's in making ourselves vulnerable that allows us to see and to be seen. I'll end with the words of Rabbi Shefa Gold, "As God sees me, I surrender to that

faithful gaze. This divine faith in me is what grows my own fragile faith. When I am known, seen, and loved completely through this divine faith, I can dare to rise to the challenge of loving this world with all that I am, with everything I've got." Amen.

Caroline Light: And now if you'll join me in The Lord's Prayer. 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. Lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Congregation: 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. Lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Lara Glass: Please stand as you are able to sing hymn number 46 in your crimson Memorial Church hymnal, Awake, Awake to Love and Work. Number 46.

Congregation/Choir: (singing)

Lara Glass: In the words of John O'Donoghue, "May we live this day compassionate of heart, clear in word, gracious in awareness, courageous in thought, and generous in love." Amen.

Congregation: Amen.