

KMarie Tejada:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

KMarie Tejada:

Welcome to morning prayers. If you please stand, as you're able, and join me in our responsive reading, which this morning is Psalm 31st, found on your Appleton Psalter Book.

KMarie Tejada:

In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

Congregation:

Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defense to save me.

KMarie Tejada:

For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

Congregation:

Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.

KMarie Tejada:

Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.

Congregation:

I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities.

KMarie Tejada:

And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.

Congregation:

I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

KMarie Tejada:

O love the Lord, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentiful rewardeth the proud doer.

Congregation:

Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

Choir:
(singing)

Gretchen Legler:
Good morning.

Congregation:
Good morning.

Gretchen Legler:

I spent the summer of 2018 in a rustic one room cabin on a small pond in western Maine. It was the best summer of my life. I walked to the mossy spring at the bend in the road to fill jugs for drinking water. I had only intermittent cell phone reception, and my daily bath was a brisk dip in the pond.

Gretchen Legler:

Two things made that summer special. One, was a story project. The ponds seemed to be a microcosm of the larger world, where people from different backgrounds, political affiliations, and socioeconomic strata are trying, and often failing, to live in harmony. As in the real world, pond residents disagreed about things. Should speedboats be allowed? Or did they make too many waves, which eroded the shoreline? Should beavers be allowed to build dams in the bog, raising the pond water level? Should land owners or property owners be allowed to intervene, in order to their trees in avert flooding of their properties?

Gretchen Legler:

I wanted to see if storytelling, or story collecting, could diffuse these tensions. I made my way via canoe or on foot to 32 different households on the pond. I asked two questions. How did you come to the pond? And, what is the most precious thing for you about this place?

Gretchen Legler:

For my neighbors, I realize, just as for me, Locke Pond was a sacred place. Many of them wept as they told me their stories; about raising their children on the pond, back when kids ran around barefoot all day in their swimsuits, ending up at who knows whose house for lunch; about sprinkling a loved one's ashes in the pond's waters; about coming to the pond after a traumatic divorce. It was a place to be held in the palm of nature, a place to be left alone, a place of peace and quiet, a respite from a world that was too fast and too busy.

Gretchen Legler:

There we all were, all expressing some version of the same special connection to this little pond in the middle of nowhere. I began to feel a thread, as light and as almost invisible as a piece of spider silk floating on a breeze, connecting me to my neighbors. Me and my partner Ruth connected to the guy who can fix anything, and works double shifts at the paper mill; connected to the retired university English professor and his poet wife; connected to the owner of the appliance store in town; connected to the school teacher from Indiana; to the judge who worked at the Hague. There we all were, connected by place.

Gretchen Legler:

The second thing that made that summer special, was the hours I wasn't doing anything. When I wasn't interviewing, I walked in the woods or sat in an Adirondack chair with a pair of binoculars, a bird book, and a cup of coffee. I listened to the birds. I finally learned the song that the red-eyed vireo. Here I am, in a tree. Here I am, look at me. I watched chipmunks with stuffed cheeks, moving caches of acorns from one secret place to another. I watched pickerel frogs hop about at the water's edge. I noticed an abundance of northern water snakes among the rocks on the shore. I collected dragonfly nymphs, and watched them hatch out and dry their wings and the sunshine. I watched sunfish making circular nests in the sand at the bottom of the pond next to the dock. At night, I heard coyotes. I even encountered a black bear.

Gretchen Legler:

The woods were bursting with life. The secret to this summer of abundance was the oak tree. The fall of 2017 was a mast year. All over New England, oaks dropped their acorns in record numbers. Come summer, more acorns meant more chipmunks, squirrels, and mice. More rodents meant more owls, coyotes, and even bobcats. More of everything. Here again was a thread like the almost invisible spider's silk, that connected me to my human neighbors, but this one was connecting the trees, birds, turtles, frogs, snakes, dragonflies, chipmunks, porcupine, mushrooms, fish, water, sun, moon, and stars. There we all were, human and other than human, connected through a powerful and paradoxically precarious, fragile harmony. Let us pray.

Gretchen Legler:

Great Weaver, thank you for this miraculous, complex, and stunningly beautiful world. Help us, as we try, in our own ways, to maintain the fragile harmony that allows all of your creations to flourish. Remind us to talk to our neighbors, and receive their stories with generosity. Remind us to sit still, as often as we can, and bear witness to the ways every being is connected.

KMarie Tejada:

Let us pray the Lord's prayer together. Our father who art in heaven-

Congregation:

Our father without art in heaven-

KMarie Tejada:

... hallowed be thy name.

Congregation:

... hallowed be thy name.

KMarie Tejada:

Thy kingdom come-

Congregation:

Thy kingdom come-

KMarie Tejeda:

... thy will be done-

Congregation:

... thy will be done-

KMarie Tejeda:

... on earth, as it is in heaven.

Congregation:

... on earth, as it is in heaven.

KMarie Tejeda:

Give us this day our daily bread.

Congregation:

Give us this day our daily bread.

KMarie Tejeda:

And forgive us our trespasses-

Congregation:

And forgive us our trespasses-

KMarie Tejeda:

... as we forgive those who trespasses against us.

Congregation:

... as we forgive those who trespass against us.

KMarie Tejeda:

And lead us not into temptation-

Congregation:

And lead us not into temptation-

KMarie Tejeda:

... but deliver us from evil.

Congregation:

... but deliver us from evil.

KMarie Tejeda:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory-

Congregation:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory-

KMarie Tejada:

... for ever, and ever. Amen.

Congregation:

... for ever, and ever. Amen.

KMarie Tejada:

Please stand as you are able, and join together in singing the hymn, When Morning Gilds the Skies, found in your crimson hymnals. This is hymn 44.

Choir:

(singing)

Congregation:

(singing)

KMarie Tejada:

And now, let us go, trusting the Lord, and feeling joyful, always. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.