

Sally Hammel:

Good morning, and welcome to morning prayers.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Sally Hammel:

Will you please stand as you're able and join me in doing the responsive reading, psalm number 57 in the black Appleton Psalter.

Sally Hammel:

Be merciful to me, O God. Be merciful to me, for in Thee my soul takes refuge. In the shadow of Thy wings, I will take refuge till the storms of destruction pass by.

Congregation:

I cry out to God Most High, the God Who fulfills His purpose for me.

Sally Hammel:

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let Thy glory be over all the earth.

Congregation:

They set a net for my steps. My soul was bowed down.

Sally Hammel:

They dug a pit in my way, but they have fallen into it themselves.

Congregation:

My heart is steadfast, O God. My heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody.

Sally Hammel:

Awake, my soul. Awake, O harp and lyre. I will awake the dawn.

Congregation:

I give thanks to Thee, O Lord, from among the peoples. I will sing praises to Thee from among the nations.

Sally Hammel:

For Thy steadfast love is great to the heavens. Thy faithfulness to the clouds.

Congregation:

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let Thy glory be over all the earth.

Choir: (singing)

Adrian Cho:

Good morning, everyone.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Adrian Cho:

I wanted to begin by first sharing a personal experience that I had recently. Last Wednesday, I had a meeting with my PhD supervisor. It's a routine check-in, just an opportunity to catch up, talk about ongoing projects, and bounce around ideas on solving problems that I've encountered. As it turned out though, this particular meeting was on unusual one. In the middle of our discussion, I began to cry. In truth, I was holding back my tears the whole time, but eventually the dam broke open. Now, I want to be clear that my mentor wasn't neither berating me nor belittling me. On the contrary, he was very, very patient and kind, for which I am very grateful. So what brought on the waterworks?

Adrian Cho:

I meet with a psycho therapist on a regular basis to work on my depression and anxiety. We do exercises to help me become more aware of my own feelings and how I relate to them. One such exercise is to take a particularly strong emotion that I'm having and giving it a vivid physical description, visualizing its shape and form. What does it look like? Where on the body do you feel it? What is its tactile sensation? Does it have a smell? Getting back to that moment in the meeting with my advisor, what I felt was petrifying fear. And the fear was a black, heavy spiked ball like the head of a flame, hot to the touch, sinking into my chest. And it was saying hateful things to me. "You are stupid and your advisor wants to get rid of you. Look at how much better everyone else is than you. Nobody likes you."

Adrian Cho:

Looking back from the tranquility of Appleton Chapel, it's easy to recognize that these thoughts are unreasonable and unfounded. The distance afforded by time, space, and this exercise of externalizing the emotion all help to put things into perspective. But in moments like those, all reason takes flight and the worst beliefs I conjure up about myself seem very, very real. And out of the fear that others will confirm these negative thoughts that I have about myself, comes the awful power of depression to prevent one from pursuing joy and a life worth living. There is one thing that depression has never culled within me, however, and that is of course the desire to make music.

Adrian Cho:

Choral singing, in particular, has a very special place in my heart. And a good choir rehearsal, it's unique for its ability to make even the hardest days seem better. The anticipation before the first downbeat, the collective taking of breath, the satisfaction of a chord struck true along with dozens of other voices, and the intensity of focus, it's hard to describe in words just the sense of togetherness that comes with it. And without exception, I find myself more relaxed and clearheaded after a good sing.

Adrian Cho:

I feel especially lucky to have sung with the University Choir here at Memorial Church. I came to Harvard three and a half years ago to begin a science PhD program and I had absolutely no idea just how much time I would spend within these walls, first as a part of the Sunday choir and then as a choral fellow. The

community of talented musicians here made me feel welcome, and accepted, and whole because we all care deeply about the same thing, making beautiful music. I made some of my closest friends and most cherished memories in the choir and I will carry them with me forward for the rest of my life.

Adrian Cho:

I would like to come to close by sharing a quote by the feminist and environmentalist, author Terry Tempest Williams, who reaffirms the life giving force of music with the following. Once upon a time when women were birds, there was the simple understanding that to sing at dawn and to sing at dusk was to heal the world through joy. The birds still remember what we have forgotten, that the world is meant to be celebrated.

Adrian Cho:

I believe that here at the Memorial Church, this elemental truth is still remembered, and I feel profoundly privileged and fortunate for having sung with the University Choir for three life changing years.

Adrian Cho:

And now please join me in reciting the Lord's prayer.

Adrian Cho:

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, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Sally Hammel:

Okay. Will you please stand as you're able to join and sing in the hymn, number 36 My Soul Awake in Render, number 36.

Choir/Congregation: (singing)

Sally Hammel:

It is Wednesday, so we have MemCafé downstairs in the student oasis. Please come join us for coffee and fellowship. And now, let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Congregation:

Amen.