

KMarie Tejeda:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Morning.

KMarie Tejeda:

Welcome to morning prayers. If you please stand as you're able and join me in a responsive reading, which this morning is Psalm 103 and it is found in your black Appleton Psalter book on page 52. Bless the Lord, O my soul, all my being His Holy name.

Congregation:

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His kindness.

KMarie Tejeda:

He forgives all your sins. Heals all your diseases.

Congregation:

He redeems your life from the pit, surrounds you with steadfast love and mercy.

KMarie Tejeda:

The Lord executes righteous acts and judgments for all who are wronged.

Congregation:

He made known His ways to Moses, His deeds to the children of Israel.

KMarie Tejeda:

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love.

Congregation:

He will not contend forever or nurse His anger for all time.

KMarie Tejeda:

He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor has He requited us according to our iniquities.

Congregation:

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love to those who fear Him.

KMarie Tejeda:

As east is far from west so far has He removed our sins from us.

Choir:

(singing)

Michael Uy:

Thank you to the choir. That was beautiful. Good morning. My passage comes from I Corinthians chapter 12 beginning at verse 20. "As it is, the parts are many, but the body is one. The eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you. And the head cannot say to the feet, I don't need you. Now you are the body of Christ. And each one of you is a part of it."

Michael Uy:

I don't remember all of fourth grade, but I remember my teacher, Mrs. Murney, who thought that one day I would be a U.S. Senator and famous author. I had zero political aspirations. I remember the playground and recess and that I loved playing tetherball and dodge ball the most. I remember the nerve wracking process of picking captains in dodge ball teams. Bianca was picked first because she could launch a ball like NASA on Cape Canaveral. Armin was picked next because he could wrap a ball like a dumpling on Chinese New Year. Down the line we went, name by name, but it wasn't just the excitement of team picking that I remember so clearly. What has unfortunately clung to my memory, like a smudge on a tablecloth was one afternoon when the process got so heated that another student, Nick, suddenly and unexpectedly called me a foreign freak. Maybe I'd said something to our team captain about Nick.

Michael Uy:

"Oh, I don't think he's as good as Paul. You should pick Paul." And the captain ran off to tell Nick, or maybe it was just something Nick had thought for a long time before it boiled over as angry stew. I don't blame Nick. If I saw him today, I wouldn't hold a grudge. After all, we were in fourth grade and I sincerely hope his views have changed or at least he's changed the way he expresses his views in public. At the time though I was ashamed and puzzled. "Foreign freak" those words carried an unseen weight. The alliteration, the fur sound in freak, which can be hard for non-native speakers, the accentuated "K" that carried a punctuation on its own, "foreign freak". I was so ashamed that I didn't dare tell anyone, not my parents or teachers. And I was so puzzled because we were both Americans, both in the same class, at the same public school, at the end of the day, both just trying to have fun on the playground.

Michael Uy:

Even though I was confused at the time, I see now with crystal clarity how that incident impacted my perspective on the world. In reflecting on Nick's hateful words today, I was a confused and hurt fourth grader, not because Nick didn't want me on his team, but because those two words were an attempt to rob me of me as if I could be and should be excised like an unwanted tumor from the body. I'm no longer in fourth grade, but I believe you and I are still playing dodge ball, at least metaphorically. We still pick teams who's on ours and who's not, but what I hope now is that the team I pick, the squad that I build around me, is one that welcomes with open arms and hearts anyone who wants to be a member of this communal body.

Michael Uy:

When I am in my community, I feel my presence recognized and treasured and I want that for everyone else. Others would notice if I was crabby or at least crabbiest than normal and give me a hug just as I would to them. We'd offer baked goods and sympathetic ears to one another at the loss of a life and we'd throw a kiki if someone landed their dream job working at Greenpeace or for Beyonce.

Michael Uy:

I choose to be a resident dean and faculty member, not because of the title or money, God knows. The main reason is because it's where I see I can make a difference for students and others on this playground. On the team we form, everyone's welcome. No one is foreign. We may not win every match. In fact, we may consistently lose many matches like Dunster IM's, but we compete together. We raise each other up and we revel in our individuality and freakiness. Our idiosyncrasies make us unique and they make our team irrepressible and fortified for the challenges that life throws at us. When life tries to knock us down, we'll catch those balls and throw them right back. Thank you.

Michael Uy:

Please now join me in saying 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 and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. The hymn is number 81 Lord of All Hopefulness, Lord of all Joy.

Congregation/Choir:

(singing)

KMarie Tejada:

And now let us go. May the Lord of hope and blessings, grant you peace and joy today and forever. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.