

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 136 found on page 68.

Lara Glass:
O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good for his mercy endureth for ever.

Congregation:
O give thanks unto the God of gods, for his mercy endureth for ever

Lara Glass:
O give thanks to the Lord of Lords, for his mercy endureth for ever.

Congregation:
To him who alone doeth great wonders, for his mercy endureth for ever.

Lara Glass:
To him that by wisdom made the heavens, for his mercy endureth for ever.

Congregation:
To him that stretched out the earth above the waters, for his mercy endureth for ever.

Lara Glass:
To him that made great lights, for his mercy endureth for ever.

Congregation:
The sun to rule by day, for his mercy endureth for ever.

Lara Glass:
The moon and stars to rule by night, for his mercy endureth for ever.

Congregation:
And hath redeemed us from our enemies, for his mercy endureth for ever.

Lara Glass:
Who give us food to all flesh, for his mercy endureth for ever.

Congregation:

Oh, give thanks unto God, for his mercy endureth forever.

Lara Glass:

You may be seated.

Choir:

(singing)

Sally Hammel:

Good morning. I'd like to start with a reading from John 6:38. "I have come not to do my own will, but the will of the one who sent me."

Sally Hammel:

The first step in spiritual life is to recognize that God is God. To me, this means that I must ask God for help and guidance before I can even begin to live his life, the life he intended for me. And secondly, I need to accept the will of God knowing that his desire for me is greater and more wonderful than anything I could possibly imagine.

Sally Hammel:

The question is how do I know the will of God? Well, that's the \$64,000 question for some of you who know what that means. Even Jesus wasn't sure. Initially he said, "I have come not to do my own will, but the will of the one who sent me," and yet in the garden of Gethsemane, he also prayed, "Let this chalice pass from me."

Sally Hammel:

So in my life I find it fairly easy to follow the will of God when the path is clear, even when faced with hardship. I'm no stranger to hard work and I believe I have a higher than average tolerance for pain, but I struggle when I can't see the path before me. When I'm unsure about which path to take, do I take action? Do I wait? Do I jump in or hold off? Coming to Harvard Divinity School and deciding to walk the Camino de Santiago are two examples in my life where I followed God's will on faith. Both were agonizing decisions. At the time it made no sense to my ordered life. Leaving my lucrative career in New York to attend divinity school? Walk across Spain with no prior hiking experience or equipment? I had no idea where these choices would lead me, and yet they both turned out to be the best decisions of my life.

Sally Hammel:

In order to hear God's direction, I need to make time to get quiet, pray, and listen. So in the morning I strive to follow a spiritual practice that includes prayer, meditation, reading of spiritual texts, and sometimes connecting with a fellow spiritual traveler. I like to read Joan Chittister's book on "The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century." This book offers a daily reflection and practical guidance on how to interpret this ancient rule and put it into daily practice. She says, "Prayer breaks us open to the designs of God for life." God is calling us to do more than the material level of life. All we have to do is learn and listen to the voice of God, and we have to do it in heart, soul, and body. The spiritual life demands all of us.

Sally Hammel:

Today I'm holding a space for my young adult daughter who's struggling with depression and searching to find her way in the world. I desperately want to relieve her pain, and yet this path, their path is not clear to me. What is God's will in this situation? What can and should I do for her? Perhaps more importantly, what should I not do? I don't know, so I pray and ask God for insight and courage it will take to go the next step, and meanwhile trust in God's goodness and grace.

Sally Hammel:

Today I ask you, what are you holding space for this morning? What question do you have for God in your life? I invite you to join me in making time to get quiet, pray, and listen. Meanwhile, here's a prayer from Joan to set us on our way. "May your journey through the questions of life bring you to a new moment of awareness. May you find embedded in the wisdom of the past, like all the students of life before you, the answers you yourself are seeking. Now, may you come to know that in every human event is a particle of the divine to which we turn." Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Lara Glass:

Please join me in offering the Lord's Prayer printed on the reverse of your order of worship. 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, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Lara Glass:

Please stand as you are able to sing hymn number 303 in your Crimson Memorial Church Hymnal, "As Pants The Heart For Cooling Streams." Number 303.

Congregation:

(singing)

Lara Glass:

May we live this day compassionate of heart, clear in word, gracious in awareness, courageous in thought, and generous in love. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.