

Grace Killian:

Good morning. Welcome to morning prayers. Our responsive reading this morning is Psalm 13, found in your Appleton Psalter. Will you please stand? How long, oh Lord, will you ignore me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

Congregation:

How long will you hide your face from me? How long will I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand?

Grace Killian:

Look at me. Answer me. Oh Lord, my God. Restore the luster to my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death.

Congregation:

Lest my enemy say, "I have overcome him," my foes exult when I totter.

Grace Killian:

But I trust in your faithfulness. My heart will exalt in your deliverance.

Congregation:

I will sing to the lord, for he has been good to me.

Choir:

(singing)

Lara Glass:

That was so beautiful. Thank you. Good morning everyone.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Lara Glass:

I begin today with a quote by Arundhati Roy, Indian writer and political activist, from her 2002 lecture entitled, Come September. In it she poignantly connected horrors of US. foreign policy, destructive powers of large corporations, and the dangers of nationalism. This passage fell toward the end of her post lecture conversation with Howard Zinn.

Lara Glass:

"There are other worlds. Other kinds of dreams. Dreams in which failure is feasible. Honorable. Sometimes even worth striving for. Worlds in which recognition is not the only barometer of brilliance or human worth. There are plenty of warriors whom I know and love, who are more valuable than myself, who go to war each day, knowing in advance that they will fail. True, they are less successful in the most vulgar sense of the word, but by no means less fulfilled. The only dream worth having is the dream that you will live while you are alive and die only when you are dead. To love, to be loved, to never forget your own insignificance. To never get used to the unspeakable violence and the vulgar

disparity of life around you. To seek joy in the saddest places to pursue beauty to its lair. To never simplify what is complicated or complicate what is simple. To respect strength, never power, and above all to watch. To try and understand, to never look away and never, never to forget."

Lara Glass:

Almost exactly eight years ago, in my last semester of college, I learned that I had been awarded a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship in rural Nepal. I had only applied for two things my senior year, with a backup plan of moving to Chicago where my sister lived and getting whatever job I could find. Having been rejected from Teach for America, which had been my first choice of a next step, I thought I didn't really have a chance of receiving the Fulbright. I had applied because I knew I was interested in teaching and was full of romantic notions of an international adventure.

Lara Glass:

Fulbright is a vestige of the Cold War era, like the Peace Corps, designed to send young, bright-eyed, and bushy-tailed Americans to often remote places in the world to do aid work so as to create an affinity for the US. Participating in this program placed me squarely, if unintentionally, within dehumanizing neo-colonial projects. These were not things I had much, if any, grasp on before I left for Nepal. They are still phenomena that I wrestle with and try to make sense of. I spent a year living in a small community outside of Kathmandu assisting Nepali teachers at a K through seven government school. I lived with a young Nepali couple and their 15 month old son.

Lara Glass:

I slowly learned Nepali language and adjusted to living with limited electricity and no heat or hot water. I learned that I love working with students and how to care for a baby. I learned how to make roti and that milk straight from a cow tastes indescribably delicious. I learned that while the extraordinary natural beauty of Nepal attracts a robust tourist industry which boosts Nepal's struggling economy, it also leaves immense destruction in its wake. I learned that while many in Nepal live in remote locations which can make accessing healthcare incredibly difficult, some of these same communities have also managed to harness the natural forces of sun, wind, and water around them to have electricity 100% of the time. This is notable in a country with widespread, regularly scheduled power outages. I learned that while there are effective, integrity affirming aid programs functioning in Nepal, there are also aid organizations that exploit Nepali communities for their own gain.

Lara Glass:

When I returned home from Nepal, I never quite knew how to answer when people would ask how it was. How do I describe my gratitude to the community I lived and worked in without romanticizing it? How do I express the complexity of my time there without negating the simple beauty and joy I experienced as well? Every time I tried, I end up complicating the simple and simplifying the complicated, which feels like a disservice to all. But as I wrote this to share with you today, it occurred to me that perhaps the only honest way to talk about my experience there, is to resist the urge to provide a neat package of lessons tied up with a bow. So instead I will close by repeating the words of our Arundhati Roy that I began with.

Lara Glass:

"The only dream worth having is the dream that you will live while you are alive and die only when you are dead. To love. To be loved. To never forget your own insignificance, to never get used to the

unspeakable violence and the vulgar disparity of life around you. To seek joy in a saddest places and to pursue beauty to its lair. To never simplify what is complicated or complicate what is simple. To respect strength and never power. Above all, to watch. To try and understand. To never look away and never to forget."

Lara Glass:

May we each have the courage today to wrestle with our own paradoxes of experience so that we may better honor the complexity of life and to love one another.

Grace Killian:

Now, let us join in the lord's prayer together as it's written on the reverse of your Order of Worship.

Congregation:

Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, they 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.

Grace Killian:

Our hymn this morning is Hymn number 200 found in your crimson hymnal, I to the Hills Will Lift Mine Eyes. Please stand.

Congregation:

(singing)

Grace Killian:

Now let us go in the peace of the lord, the name of Christ. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.