

Sally Hammel:

Good morning and welcome to morning prayers. Will you please stand, as you're able, to join me in the responsive reading number 20 in the Black Appleton Psalter book. May the most high answer you in the day of trouble, the name of God of Jacob defend you.

Congregation:

Send you help from the holy place and strengthen you out of Zion.

Sally Hammel:

Remember all your offerings and accept your burnt sacrifice.

Congregation:

Grant you your heart's desire prosper all your plans.

Sally Hammel:

We will shout for joy at your victory and triumph in the name of God. May the Most High grant all your requests.

Congregation:

Now I know that God gives victory to the anointed one; out of the holy heaven God will answer with a strong and victorious right hand.

Sally Hammel:

Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will call upon the name of our God.

Congregation:

They will collapse and fall down, but we will rise and stand upright.

Sally Hammel:

Oh God, give victory to our sovereign and answer us when we call.

Choir:

(singing)

Joseph Singer:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Joseph Singer:

Reading from Genesis chapter-two. Everyone on earth had the same language and the same words, and they said, "Come let us build a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, so that we can make a name

for ourselves." God came down and saw what the people had done, and God confounded their speech so that they could not understand one another, and God scattered them over the face of the earth. We are living in a time of partisan politics where we seem to have split into separate factions who cannot understand each other and who do not even speak the same language. How do you communicate across difference? How can we persuade each other, when we trust different sources of authority, when we cannot agree on what is fact and what is fiction, and when it seems we do not even share the same fears and longings?

Joseph Singer:

Almost 50 years ago, I lived in Mexico for about a year. I learned Spanish in high school, and I was eager to try it out. I remember the first time I talked with someone who did not know a word of English. It was at a post office. I was buying stamps to send a letter home to my parents. There're two kinds of stamps, the kind you use to mail a letter and the kind you use to impress a mark on the page. I had been taught to use the word "estampilla" for a , and the word "timbres" for the other kind.

Joseph Singer:

The clerk was confused when I asked for "estampilla", and he said, "No, you want timbres I was confused. We went back and forth several times until he pointed to the postal stamps, and he said, "timbres" and then he pointed to the metal stamp, and he said, "estampilla." And then I realized he and I were using opposite words. The word for postal stamp in Mexico was timbres not estampilla. I acknowledge my mistake, and we laughed about it, and then he sold me some timbres. I remember this quite vividly. I had the most powerful feeling that I just experienced a miracle.

Joseph Singer:

I had met someone who did not speak a word of my language, and we had talked with each other. We had stumbled over our different words, but we had talked, and we had learned, and it ended with laughter. Our different languages were a barrier, but they were also a bridge. We're able to communicate for two reasons. First, I had worked very hard to learn his language. And second, he was patient. He was kind with me. He knew I needed something, and it was his job to help me. And so he listened to me. Communication took work on both sides, and it required each of us to make the effort to understand what the other person had to say.

Joseph Singer:

And when it worked, it brought me a quite profound sense of joy. The people who built the Tower of Babel had only one language. They did not need to talk with each other. They were building the tower, not because it would bring them closer to God, but to make a name for themselves. No one questioned the wisdom of the project. No one dissented. To have dissent, you have to have a conversation, and to have a conversation, there must be at least two people, and when two people talk, we will inevitably have different words. The story that falls immediately after the Tower of Babel was the saga of Abraham. The story about the task of forging a lasting covenant, a covenant built on doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. The task is only possible if we can get beyond ourselves. If we can see other people, and if we make an effort to understand their words.

Joseph Singer:

Why should we make that effort? Because other people are created in the image of God, and because they have something to say. If we're looking for an answer to partisan politics, it might help us to

remember that. Can you hear that song, Let Us Be God's Will .A prayer. This is from the morning blessings the Jews say every morning. Modim anachu l'fanecha, melech banu nishmatanu b'chemla, raba emunatekhah. We offer thanks to you, ever-living God, that you have restored our souls to us in mercy. How great is your trust in us. Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha-olam, hamekhn mitz-adei gaver. Praise to you, Adonai our God, sovereign of the universe, who strengthens our steps.

Sally Hammel:

Please join me in reciting the Lord's prayer on the back of the order of worship.

Congregation:

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.

Sally Hammel:

Will you please stand and join us in singing Love Is Kind And Suffers Long, number-331 in the Crimson Hymnal, number-331.

Congregation:

(singing)

Sally Hammel:

So it's Wednesday. We have MemCafe on Wednesday. Please join us downstairs in the student oasis for coffee and conversation. And now, may the Lord bless you and keep you and be gracious to you. The Lord turns his face toward you and give you peace. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.