

KMarie Tejada:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good Morning.

KMarie Tejada:

Welcome to Morning Prayers. If you please be stand as you are able and join me in our responsive reading, which this morning, is Psalm 67. It's founding your Appleton Psalter Book on page 34. "May God be gracious to us, and bless us, and make His face to shine upon us."

Congregation:

"That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving power among all nations."

KMarie Tejada:

"Let the peoples praise thee, O God. Let all the peoples praise thee."

Congregation:

"Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for thou must judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth."

KMarie Tejada:

"Let the peoples praise thee, O God. Let all the peoples praise thee."

Congregation:

"The earth has yielded its increase. God, our God has blessed us."

KMarie Tejada:

"God has blessed us. Let all the end of the earth fear Him."

Choir: (singing)

Alexandra Grayson:

A reading from the first letter to the Corinthians. "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels but do not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging symbol. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It does not dishonor others. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." Here ends the reading.

Alexandra Grayson:

For Valentine's Day, I thought I would like to talk about love, but not just any kind of love. I want to talk about a special type of love originating in a small church camp at the base of the Appalachian Mountains

in Kentucky known as the Cathedral Domain. Affectionately coined The Domain, this camp has been the source of Domain love for decades upon decades, chasing as far back as the early 1900s. It attracts both the young and old for trips full of hiking to the tops of mountains and dance parties late into the night, all fueled by this allusive Domain love.

Alexandra Grayson:

Throughout my time at The Domain, I've tried to define what it is exactly that draws people back. I'll be the first to admit that the facilities aren't the newest, the food isn't Michelin Star-worthy, and sometimes the bugs can be a bit much. But that doesn't prevent people from coming back year after year, proudly wearing vintage camp shirts and fondly arguing over who delivered the final jump to break the back porch in one of the cabins a few years ago. Even as I found myself up here at Harvard, hundreds of miles away from camp, I still try to find ways to visit when I'm home, assuming that life is too busy and I won't be able to return again. Yet time and time again, I find myself singing along to the closing song with the final dance surrounded by my friends, campers, and mentors.

Alexandra Grayson:

So you might be thinking that the answer to my problem is obvious. It's the friends and memories that draw us back, right? But that's not the entire story. I know plenty of people, including myself, who at one point or another, found themselves without close friends at Domain. So, why did we come back? I believe the answer lies in the mountains. Domain has a massive wooden cathedral that overlooks the Valley below camp, hence the name Cathedral Domain. There's something about staring out of that massive window out into the sprawling land of trees and mountains that brings about a sense of inner peace, leave the mountain feeling recharged, ready to take on the world no matter how short your visit was.

Alexandra Grayson:

In a world dominated by the fast-paced nature of work, school, and technology, we aren't presented with many opportunities to slow down and get a chance to look around. Domain gives us this chance. Whether it's lying in a hammock staring up into the millions of stars while a lone guitar plays in the background, or it's from looking out into the valley from the top of Patterson after a long hike and climb to the top, everyone can find a place to relax and reflect. This also allows people to become comfortable with their true selves, sometimes called their Domain-self, as they often feel that they can only be accepted in an environment like this. They aren't afraid to dance along to songs from the '90s, wear their most interesting Goodwill finds, sing the announcement song when someone's trying to give directions, or even perform skits at the talent show that make no sense.

Alexandra Grayson:

They feel at peace with themselves in the world around them, and each visit gives them hope that one day they can have that same energy off the mountain. So maybe Domain love isn't just found in the people. It's found in everything at Domain. It's the peacefulness from nature, that first hug with a lifelong friend you haven't seen in a while, or the bond that comes from singing Sanctuary together at the healing service. It's a feeling that will follow you throughout life and will always drive you back when you need it most. As we prepare to head back out into the world and begin our days, I would like to share a prayer of strength we often say at the end of camp.

Alexandra Grayson:

Please join me in praying. May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind always be at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face and rains fall soft upon your fields. And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Alexandra Grayson:

Now, please join me in saying the Lord's prayer.

All:

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.

KMarie Tejada:

Please stand as you are able and join together in singing the hymn 370, which is Glory to You, O Faithful God. (singing). Let us go in peace. May we can feel the love of God and His presence throughout this day and that we can show His love to others today and the days to come. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.