

(music).

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Good morning. Welcome to morning prayers in the Memorial Church, in this the first day of our fall term. We are so glad to be here and that you are here with us. Please rise as you are able, and join us in reciting the responsorial psalm, psalm one.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Audience:

But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he mediate day and night.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither. And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Audience:

The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

Audience:

For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Choir:

(singing).

Lawrence S. Bacow, President of Harvard University:

Good morning, everyone. It's wonderful to be here in person for morning prayers. It's an occasion I've been looking forward to for some time now. I can't imagine a better way to begin the academic year that in the company of our recently appointed Pusey minister. Welcome Matt to the first day of school in your new post. May all of your days to come be infused with wisdom and grace. And may you find joy and satisfaction in your work with this very special community. We are deeply grateful and excited by your leadership of Memorial Church.

The past 18 months have given me ample time to think about our community. In the early days of the pandemic, I actually worried that being apart would erode our care and concern for each other. In fact, nothing could have been farther from the truth. Seeing how we pulled together as individuals, as a community, all over the country and all over the world, to support each other, to support ourselves, to support our families, has really given me great hope for the future. People have focused on how we can

fulfill our mission, regardless of circumstances. It's been a constant source of inspiration to me. And for all of you who participated in helping to create this sense of community, I just want to say thank you.

Early on, our alumni worked hard to secure needed and scarce personal protective equipment and send it to our hospitals to protect our first responders. People donated generously to our pandemic relief fund, and helped to provide emergency financial assistance to members of our community. Belts were tightened throughout the university so that we could ensure that we could keep literally everybody at Harvard employed. I hope you feel as I do, optimistic about our future, whatever this uncertain future may bring, because of your experience as part of this special community during these most challenging of times.

Now, as we begin in a more familiar kind of academic year, I find myself wondering whether or not we can bring the inclinations that we've had over the past year and a half, to be generous, to be open, to be understanding, to be kind, to this space, and to many other spaces across this wonderful institution that have stood empty for far too long. How can we ensure that the capacities that we've all developed and expanded in the face of trauma persist and enrich the months and years to come? How can we preserve this sense of community? How can we demonstrate to our first-year students, who I welcomed just yesterday at convocation, that Harvard, a place that often awes, intimidates the best of us, is really ready to embrace them? The world, it seems, often is at odds with these ends.

By now, unfortunately, we've all seen or heard a story or two, or even more, witnessed it ourselves, about rude or abusive customers at restaurants driving staff to tears, or forcing resignations and closures because of people behaving badly. We've all seen or heard a story or two, or even witnessed it ourselves, I'm sorry to say, of individuals refusing to wear masks, refusing to protect themselves and others, refusing to be responsible members of society. And those, unfortunately, are just a few examples. There are many, many more of a type of, let's face it, meanness and crudeness and rudeness for some who seem to delight in the suffering of others.

Now, my own faith teaches us that we sanctify God when we treat others with kindness and respect. This of course applies to all the big moments in our lives where we have a chance to do undeniably good things for others, to reach out and help others. But Judaism also put special emphasis on the small moments, the everyday interaction actions that shape how people feel about each other and about themselves. Offering an example, the Talmud actually places its readers in a busy butcher shop, believe it or not. And where the simple act of paying for what one has received, in a timely manner, in a considerate manner, reveals character, inspires others, and in the end, honors God.

Being a member of this community, I think, creates ceaseless opportunities to excel in small moments to treat equally well all of the many people who come to Harvard, to live, to work, to learn, and to try and strive to, I hope, create a better future for everyone. May we commit ourselves this year, of all years, to making our university a bit cleaner, a bit gentler, a bit more generous, a bit more understanding. May Harvard be as humane as it is humbling. And may we all stay safe and healthy in the year to come. Thank you all. It's an honor to be here with you and to be part of what I hope we will all create in the year ahead. Thank you.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

I invite you please to rise, as you are able, for the prayers.

Oh God, the King eternal, who dividest the day from the night, and [turnest 00:15:53] the shadow of death into the morning. Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep thy law, and guide our feet into the way of peace. But having done thy will with cheerfulness while it was day, we may one night cometh, rejoice to give thee thanks. Amen.

Audience:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

And now we pray together the prayer Jesus taught, saying, "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." Please remain masked while joining in singing our concluding hymn, hymn number one, which is printed on the back of your service sheet.

Choir:

(singing.)

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

May the peace of God, which passes all our understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God. And may the blessing of God be with you this day and always. Amen.

Audience:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us bless the Lord.

Organ music:

(music).