

Anna Burnham:

Good morning and welcome to morning prayers at Memorial Church. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book, Psalm 139 found on page 70. Please remain masked and stand as you are able to read responsibly by the whole verse.

Anna Burnham:

Oh Lord, you have searched me and known me.

Congregation:

You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You discern my thoughts from far away.

Anna Burnham:

You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

Congregation:

Even before a word is on my tongue, oh Lord, you know it completely.

Anna Burnham:

You hem me in behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Congregation:

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is so high that I cannot attain it.

Anna Burnham:

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

Congregation:

If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

Anna Burnham:

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea...

Congregation:

Even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

Anna Burnham:

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me and the light around me become night..."

Congregation:

Even the darkness is not dark to you. The night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Choir:

(singing)

Jessica Young Chang:

Good morning. A reading from the Gospel of Matthew in the sixth chapter, starting at the 19th verse.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

I'm a third year at the div school and entering your last cycle of anything makes you nostalgic, right? So already, I'm starting to look back at my time and think about what I've learned. Reverend Potts, with whom I've had the fortune of sharing classroom space, was one of my first professors here. And in his Intro to Ministry Studies class, we read an essay by French theologian Simone Weil, entitled Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God.

This sounds like the right thing to read for first years who are about to learn Greek or more Arabic, who are about to grapple with their own theology or meaning-making or research questions, who are trying to pretend they aren't terrified about something having gone terribly wrong that has resulted in them being here at Harvard. And there is Simone with her earnest, dedicated, hardworking temperament in solidarity with soldiers and factory workers telling us, "Keep your nose to the grindstones and use the struggle of classwork to develop your capacity for paying attention."

"The key to a Christian conception of studies," she writes, is the realization that prayer consists of attention. This word attention plucks at my sleeve. It makes me think of my yoga practice, which I posit is not just physical, but spiritual. One of my beloved teachers, Jim Bennett, would facilitate practice full of and enlivening postures and breath work, and would consistently admonish us about our wandering minds. "There's nothing like a balancing pose to make you pay attention," he would say. It requires all your prana, your energy. And when you pay attention, you build energy. Where your attention goes, your prana follows where your attention goes, your prana follows.

It sounds like Jesus is saying the same thing in his teaching. At first blush, it's easy for me to think he's talking just about money, about tangible treasure, because things that are material are subject to thievery and disillusion. But when I look closer, when I ask, what do I treasure, I realize that more than money, it's time and attention. If this sounds like a privileged position, it's because it is a privileged position. And whether you have a little money or a lot, your attention is highly valuable. It is costly. It is treasure.

Think of how many hours you have to work to buy takeout this weekend, or a new pair of kicks. Think of how much attention we will have to pay to something or someone to pay off our degrees. Your time and attention always costs you something. And if you put it here, you can't put it there. "Where your treasure is, there your heart is," Jesus says. Entering my third year of deep study, I am learning to treasure my attention more than almost anything else. My capacity to participate in class is richer if I have gotten seven hours of sleep the night before, instead of pulling an all nighter. The more time that I spend in research, thought or prayer over an assignment, the more integrity it has. If I make deliberate time to listen and abide with my friends and loved ones, the rest and nourishment I experience in community with them is better by an order of magnitude than if I rest by vegging out in front of some screen.

If my attention is treasure, then I better really want to know or think about or engage in the ideas and relationships into which I put in. Do you treasure your attention? What are you paying attention to? Let us value our attention. Let us be willing to pay attention to who and what is sacred and necessary, which will sometimes mean engaging with ideas, problems, or people that we might rather avoid. Let us choose thoughtfully and prayerfully how to invest the treasure that is our attention and engage in those

relationships, communities, situations, and opportunities that move us closer to one another and closer to the divine. Will you pray with me?

Holy, attentive, listening God, thank you for all the ways in which you invite us to pay attention to you, to pay attention with you. Reveal to us those calls and situations of which we take no notice. Forgive us when we are afraid or distracted or reluctant to accept what you show us. Continue to draw us close to you with your invitations for us to store up our treasure of time and talent where it belongs, with you, working to manifest your will and your work in the world. Let us pray together now as our brother Jesus taught us, saying: Our father who are in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your 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. Amen.

Anna Burnham:

Please stand as you are able, and together let us sing the hymn My God How Wonderful Thou Art, number 199, found in your crimson Harvard Hymnal.

Congregation:

(singing)

Anna Burnham:

The Lord be with you. The service has ended. Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.