

Theresa Lungu:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good Morning.

Theresa Lungu:

Welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton psalter book, psalm number 19 found on page 10. Please stand as you're able to read responsibly by whole verse.

Theresa Lungu:

The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Congregation:

Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

Theresa Lungu:

There is no speech, nor are there words. Their voice is not heard.

Congregation:

Yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun.

Theresa Lungu:

Which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

Congregation:

Its rising is from the end of the heavens and its circuit to the end of them, and nothing is hidden from its heat.

Theresa Lungu:

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple.

Congregation:

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes.

Theresa Lungu:

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

Congregation:

More to be desired are they than gold, even than much finer gold, sweeter also than honey and drippings of honeycomb.

Choir:

(singing)

Lawrence Jie:

A reading from Luke 6:32 to 36. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do, who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that to other sinners. But love your enemies. Do good to them and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you'll be children of the most high, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your father is merciful.

Good morning. Y'all I'm so glad to be sharing my morning prayer with you. Today, I'm hoping to give you a glimpse into a typical spring afternoon of character building at the Jias', namely pulling weeds. In elementary school, after finishing up whatever imaginary game we had invented in the cul-de-sac, I put on my brother's work jeans, which were a little too long. I put on my mom's sun hat, which was a little too floppy, and reluctantly trooped my way out into the front yard. I would squat down, shoulder to shoulder, right next to my brother and sister, and get pulling. After what seemed like 999 weeds later, I sat down, sweat dripping, and looked over my pile of weeds. My Lord, no wonder I'm exhausted. Look at the roots on those things. Two thirds of the weed is buried underground. I then looked at the pink blooming dogwood tree in my front yard, and wonder, that thing has been through hurricanes and it's still stuck right there in the ground. Those roots have got to be huge.

I look back on these childhood memories, fondly, even the ones associated with yard work. And I now appreciate those people and sepia-toned moments in Midlothian, Virginia more than ever. I'm my own person now, speaking in a church more than 500 miles away from home, in a school that's beautifully stimulating and occasionally overwhelming to my senses. There are nights when I walk home from Lamont Library, which I've noticed is the perfect amount of time to reconsider a career change, [inaudible 00:10:32] my paper approved didn't get written. There are also days when I stroll back to my dorm feeling just a little too big for my britches. And is in these moments that remember that impromptu observation about the dogwood I made years ago in my front yard. The height of a tree is merely a reflection of the strength of its roots. My roots, like those of many here today, begin with my mom, dad, brother, and sister. My happiness is a reflection of their love. My success is a reflection of their sacrifice, and my failures, well, are a reflection that I should have eaten more vegetables like my mom told me to.

These are the water, soil and sunlight of my life. Their support in spite of my shortcomings fuels my faith in all that I do. The challenges and associated spontaneity of this past year have led me on adventures far from my parents and allowed me to reflect deeply about what family really is. I spent the majority of these past months traipsing around with friends in far away and bizarre places, on sand dunes and next to volcanoes, in blizzards and on beaches. And in my time away from home and with friends, I've come to fully appreciate that that familial brand of love is not just found [inaudible 00:12:00]. Families come in all shapes and sizes all around the world.

I have family in and away from home. This brings me comfort, knowing the people who ground me and keep me root can be found all around me. This way, home can be found anywhere for anyone, a true blessing from God. There are many things I do not know, but on this, I'm certain. My family, wherever they may be, not only fuels my faith, but is my faith. My family and my faith, the families and faith that deeply bind together every community. For these, I'm thankful. For these, I pray. Amen.

Please stand as you're able and let us pray. Dear God, thank you for this opportunity to learn more about you. Help us now to carry this new knowledge in our minds, may it deeply impact our hearts, our relationships, and our lives. And now together, let us recite the Lord's prayer, 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.

Theresa Lungu:

Please join us in the hymn Dear Mother God, number 204 in the crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation:

(singing)

Theresa Lungu:

Thank you for joining us this morning. And as we go forth unto this day, may we lavish Christ's abounding goodness upon our families, friends and colleagues. Holy Spirit, come and equip us in our workplace, guide us in our school life, and inspire us in our neighborhoods. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.