

Anna Burnham:

Good morning.

Congregation:

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Anna Burnham:

Welcome to morning prayers at Memorial Church. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book, Psalm 42 found on page 21. Please remain masked and stand as you are able to read responsibly by the whole verse. As a heart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, oh God.

Congregation:

My soul thirsts for God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?

Anna Burnham:

My tears have been my food day and night while men say to me continually, "Where is your God?"

Congregation:

These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng.

Anna Burnham:

And led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of Thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

Congregation:

Why are you cast down O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?

Speaker 1:

Hope in God for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

Congregation:

Deep calls to deep at the thunder of thy cataracts; all thy waves and thy billows have gone over me.

Anna Burnham:

As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me while they say to me continually, "Where is your God?"

Congregation:

Why are you cast down O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall again praise him, my help and God.

Choir:
(singing)

Lauren Church:

Good morning. The reading I'm going to share this morning is a poem by Wendell Berry. Where is it? Can you hear me now? Okay. Called Manifesto, The Mad Farmer Liberation Front. Love the quick profit, the annual raise, vacation with pay. Want more of everything ready-made. Be afraid to know your neighbor and to die and you'll have a window in your head. Not even your future will be a mystery anymore. Your mind will be punched in a card and shut away in a little drawer. When they want you to buy something, they'll call you. When they want you to die for a profit, they will let you know. So friends, every day do something that won't compute. Love the Lord. Love the world. Work for nothing. Take all that you have and be poor. Love someone who does not deserve it.

Give your approval to all you cannot understand. Praise ignorance. For what man has not encountered, he has not destroyed. Ask the questions that have no answers. Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias. Say that the forest is your main crop that you did not plant, that you will not live to harvest. Say the leaves are harvested when they rotted in the mold. Call that profit. Prophecy such returns. Put your faith in the two inches of hummus that will build under the trees every thousand years. Expect the end of the world. Laugh. Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful that you have considered all the facts.

So long as women do not go cheap for power, please women more than men. Ask yourself, will this satisfy a woman, satisfy to bear a child? Go with your love to the fields. Lie easy in the shade. Rest your head in her lap. Swear allegiance to what is nice in your thoughts. As soon as the generals and the politicians can predict your emotions, the motions of your mind, lose it. Leave it as a sign to mark the false trail, the way you didn't go. Be like the fox who makes more tracks than necessary, some in the wrong direction. Practice resurrection.

My plane ride home from Boston goes through Chicago and from there, it's another 45-minute flight on a little tiny plane to my hometown near Traverse City, Michigan. Seeing Lake Michigan from the plane window always brings tears to my eyes. I feel myself let go of a breath that I didn't know I was holding. The tightness of my chest relaxes and the anxiety that had been building since I left home just fades away when I see the blue beneath me. In many ways, my hometown has become my identity at Harvard. I clung so tightly to pieces of home and passive components of my life there crystallized into ideals that I let define me.

I think this came from a place of missing home, as well as a place of resistance. I tried to make a place for the simple lifestyle I was used to for the slow cadence of a small town. I saw the culture I carried with me in opposition to the culture of self-importance or pretension, out of touchness sometimes, or the need for status and power that I conflated with Harvard itself. Of course, transitions are hard for everyone and eventually, I found people in places that made Harvard feel like home. I found solace at the Charles and walks in the park and started babysitting, ways to connect to Boston in moments where I felt disenchanted with Harvard culture. I felt a similar piece on the T-ride back from Boston Logan releasing that same breath as I crossed MGH Bridge and saw the city lights.

I thought I found a middle ground, excuse me, a true contentment with my temporary home. Even temporary homes build themselves into you though, and my comfort with this transience between the two places became embodied in who I am. The last few times I've gone home, I've felt my anxiety build instead of subside. I sit on the shores of Lake Michigan and I miss it knowing that I can't move back after graduation. I know that I won't be able to resume the life I had and also feel fulfilled. Watching the waves, I feel sadness build and crash, and I'm flooded with anger. No one warned me that leaving meant I couldn't come back.

It was the ultimate betrayal on both sides. Who had I become if I didn't belong to the place that made me who I am? And if this place was everything to me, how could it not be enough? When I come to this question from a place of fear, it threatens who I am. My restlessness at home must reflect changes in my values, a need for status, or the breakneck speeds that I spent all of college denouncing. Worse yet, maybe I never belonged at home. I had learned the small town lifestyle, but it was never enough for me, implicating my own feelings of self-importance. When the fear recedes though, I just feel gratitude. As much as these places are different, they're the same. Both have a sense of pride for the values they've cultivated, ambition, empathy, conviction, a need to understand and engage the world around you.

These are all values that drive life in the pace in Boston. Boston gave me the opportunity to express values I learned from home and challenged me to interrogate them. Simplicity can be self-indulgent. The privilege to not engage with the complexity of life and being so tied to your beliefs that you live unaffected in the world around you certainly is a type of pretension. Once I find myself in a transient place again... Once again, I find myself in a transient place, ebbing and flowing between the state of anxiety and extreme gratitude, uncertain. There are moments I know I'm in the right place though, swimming in the lake that doesn't ask me to pick a side or riding the T washed with a sense of anonymity that dissipates any self-importance or obligation.

There's a security and the genuineness of it. A contentment I know I can't fake. I think as much as Berry's poem is about a certain lifestyle or a connection to physical place, it's also about a daily decision to be intentional about sorting through packages of values that come tied to a place. I'm so grateful for the plane rides and train rides. The liminal space between home and here has become a time to reflect and parse through the lessons either place offers me, shifting scenery that invites me to reevaluate my perspective.

I don't really have a nice way to tie this up because these are definitely questions I'm still thinking about, but these are just a few lyrics from an artist that I really love from home that kind of remind me it's probably not as complicated as I'm making it out to be. Take my hand, my one, and we'll run off to the sun. Together, we will run the River Jordan and with stars in our eyes, we'll sleep under the skies, safe on the banks of the River Jordan. Let your troubles go. Let them melt like the snow. You won't need them anymore on the River Jordan, and let joy fill your cup. Let it fill you right up. You'll have more than enough on the River Jordan. Thank you.

Anna Burnham:

Please stand as you are able and together, let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught us. 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

trespassed 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. Let us sing the hymn, Lead Us, O Father, In the Paths of Peace, verses one and two, number 315 found in your crimson Harvard Hymnal.

Congregation:

(Singing)

Anna Burnham:

God, the places and landscapes you have made make us. They shape us, they hold us, and release us as we change and grow. May we forever be attuned to them and attuned to your presence in them as we work to honor you. May your strengths sustain us, may your power preserve us, may your hands protect us, and may your love go with us into this day, oh God. Amen. The service has ended. Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.