

Laurie Sedwick:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Laurie Sedwick:

And welcome to morning prayers. Please stand as you are able for our responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book. This morning, we'll be reading Psalm 54 found on page 27. Save me oh God, by your name, and vindicate me by your might.

Congregation:

Hear my prayer, oh God. Give ear to the words of my mouth.

Laurie Sedwick:

For the insolent have risen against me. The ruthless seek my life. They do not set God before them.

Congregation:

But surely, God is my helper. The Lord is the upholder of my life.

Laurie Sedwick:

He will repay my enemies for their evil. In your faithfulness, put an end to them.

Congregation:

With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you. I will give thanks to your name, oh Lord, for it is good.

Laurie Sedwick:

For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

Choir:

(singing)

Lt. Col. Laura Weimer:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Lt. Col. Laura Weimer:

I'll start with a scripture reading from Ecclesiastes chapter four, verse seven. "Again, I saw something meaningless under the sun. There was a man all alone. He had neither son, nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. 'For whom am my toiling?' he asked, 'and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?' This too is meaningless, a miserable business. Two are better

than one because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up, but pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

The holiday today was originally known as Armistice Day. At the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, fighting ceased in World War I in 1918. The holiday was first designated in 1926 to commemorate this armistice, and was renamed Veterans Day in 1954 after World War II to remember veterans of all wars who have served our nation. As Congress originally stated for this day to be celebrated with thanksgiving and prayer, I thank you for joining us today and for allowing me to share are some of my personal thoughts. Veterans Day. Every year, my mind goes in many different directions, thinking of family members, friends, colleagues, and even the Harvard graduates with their names on the walls around us, all of whom I feel connected to through service to our nation. That's the technical definition of being a veteran, having served. But what crosses my mind and my heart most is what it feels like to be a veteran.

After graduating from West Point shortly after 9/11, I made my first trip far away from home to Germany. And just a few months later at the age of 23, I found myself in Iraq. Despite my new surroundings in foreign countries and the need to be more independent than ever before, I never felt alone. I was welcomed into a team of people who were also far away from home. I felt a sense of belonging, felt like I was seen. At such a young age, and in challenging situations of new responsibilities and even physical danger, I embarked on a journey of self-discovery. While a very personal journey, again, I was far from alone. I was sharpened by my subordinates, my peers, my supervisors, to learn and refine my leadership style, to communicate and to invest in those around me. I was supported by my dad, a career veteran, through email sharing insights and advice from his own career, and by connecting me to friends, he served with who were now some of my senior leaders.

From my earliest days in the Army, I felt an immense sense of purpose, an opportunity to contribute my unique skills to solve problems and help the organization succeed. I had an knack for organizational skills, namely through Microsoft Excel, that helped account for people, equipment and vehicles that traveled across continents for missions. And I also had PowerPoint skills that I put to use putting together Father's Day cards with pictures of families, for our fathers serving in Iraq. In every job, from the first to my most recent, I felt immense pride in being part of a team that pulls together their collective skills to accomplish the most difficult missions, together. The people I served next to were unified in their commitment to a set of values, loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, personal courage. I knew that the men and women I served alongside could be trusted with my life. And they carried that trust out.

We were committed to each other, to the ideals of freedom for our nation and for those that we serve. This commitment, brought an inherent sense of sacrifice. Of the many shared bonds among veterans, this is likely the strongest. We share many familiar experiences, and we know the many hardships from our service, physical hardship, geographic, family and relationships, and a loss of our brothers and sisters in arms. My mind goes to my West Point classmates, my black sheep soldiers, the military police who didn't come home, but whose legacy continues in our hearts. So as I get back to work on my dissertation and think about my sense of purpose here at Harvard, yet again, far away from home, I

think about where I started. I still feel that sense of belonging, connection to the men and women I have served and sacrificed with. I feel like they know the truest and most raw sense of who I am, but here I honor my fellow veterans by continuing to refine and contribute my skills, committing to self-reflection and growth, continuing to serve, value and love people, and living those values worthy of their hardship and sacrifice.

Laurie Sedwick:

Please stand as you are able and let us pray. Almighty God, our heavenly Father, guide nations of the world into the way of justice and truth, and establish among them that peace which is the fruit of righteousness, that they may become the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Laurie Sedwick:

And now let us together 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 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.

Laurie Sedwick:

Let us sing the hymn Oh, Lord of Life, Whose Power Sustains Us, number 88, found in your crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation:

(singing)

Laurie Sedwick:

Following the benediction, please feel welcome to join us for the procession in the memorial room. Let us pray. Almighty God, we commend to your gracious care and keeping the women and men of our armed forces at home and abroad. Defend them day by day with your heavenly grace, strengthen them in their trials and temptations, give them courage to face the perils which beset them, and grant them a sense of your abiding presence, wherever they may be, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.