

Cheyenne Boon:

Good morning, and welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton psalter book, psalm number 72, found on page 36. Please stand as you are able, remain masked and read responsibly by whole verse.

Cheyenne Boon:

Give the king thy justice, oh God, and the righteousness to the royal son.

Congregation:

May he judge thy people with righteousness and thy poor with justice.

Cheyenne Boon:

Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people and the hills in righteousness.

Congregation:

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy and crush the oppressor.

Cheyenne Boon:

May he live while the sun endures and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.

Congregation:

May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

Cheyenne Boon:

In his days, may righteousness flourish and peace abound till the moon be no more.

Congregation:

May he have dominion from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.

Cheyenne Boon:

May all kings fall down before him all nations serve him.

Congregation:

For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper.

Cheyenne Boon:

You may be seated.

Choir:

(singing)

Sarah Darling:

Good morning. These words are from T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets. "To apprehend the points of intersection of the timeless with time, is an occupation for the saint. No occupation either, but something given and taken, in a lifetime's death in love, ardor and selflessness, and self-surrender. For most of us, there is only the unattended moment, the moment in and out of time, the distraction fits, lost in a shaft of sunlight, the wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning, or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply that it is not heard at all, but you are the music while the music lasts." Four Quartets is an incredible well to drink from. I find myself returning to it again and again, over the years as my life changes and different resonances fall out of these words.

And with that in mind, I'd love to read the final lines with you once more. "The wild thyme unseen or the winter lightning, or the waterfall or music heard so deeply that it is not heard at all, but you are the music while the music lasts." It's impossible for it to be the same way twice. Like any work of art, it unfolds in every moment, both for me as I speak it, and for you as you hear it and experience it. Most of my days are spent rehearsing music. And so I find myself engaging in a process like that one again and again and again. I will shake a musical phrase until something I can believe in drops out of it. I'll repeat it until my body knows every micro-movement that it needs to express it. If I'm rehearsing with my dear beloved Harvard Baroque, we'll find a way to do this together, to breathe and articulate. And as we get to know each other as one collective musical body, miraculously, it gets better.

And then we get to the show. The Harvard Baroque has been lucky enough to play two concerts in this beautiful sanctuary in the last two weeks. And the concert energy for a group with a lot of new players in it can only be described as ecstatically intense. We have lived and breathed this music, and then it's time to share. And what we all desperately want in that moment is for that performance to be our one perfect shot. We want to be the thing that T.S. Eliot describes. We want to be the music while the music lasts. And it just seems so intensely important. And what's amazing, utterly amazing, is that so often that magic does, improbably, happen.

But the thing that I'd love to just highlight today, that I think is also worth saying, is another truth that every performer knows, which is that it doesn't always work like that. Sometimes you have a bad show. You miss that run that you were really hoping to nail, and it's gone. Maybe you're just tired. Everything feels hard and not focused. And you think, ah, this is the moment when I want to present this perfect music. And perhaps you feel it slipping away, and that's hard. And then the great indignity. You finish and you've done the best that you could, and you feel like, oh, it wasn't quite what I wanted. You want to slink away. You want to vanish. But your friend in the audience finds you and says, "Hey, that was fantastic. I loved that." And you know that they mean it.

And all you want to say is, "No, you're wrong. It was terrible." All you want to do in that moment is just tell your friends that they are wrong. But, and this is the great mystery of performing music and one that descends again and again and again, your friend is the one who is right, always. Your friend is able to see the beauty that in that moment you are unable to see. You may be stuck in that one place, in that one moment, but your friend has the power to perceive everything that surrounds it. They can see all of those loving repetitions that brought you to exactly where you are, all the different facets of this music that you've been living and breathing for so long. And now they are actually there within you, invisible to you, and yet still absolutely present, and they continue to carry you forward. And this is a specific kind

of beauty. It's a beauty, I would say, that's born out of trust. And as a musician, it is your job, your one job, to protect that beauty and to keep it alive and alone.

And this feels like faith to me. It's wonderful when it's easy. It's wonderful when it flows. But the times when it's not easy are precisely when you need it. And when you can hold on to that belief during the dry patch, during that show, during that feeling, that's exactly when you need it, and also exactly when you uncover something new. What I learned from [inaudible 00:15:29] concert is that grace extends out way beyond where I myself can perceive it. T.S. Eliot also talks so elegantly about the point where time intersects with the timeless. And in a performance, I might be caught in time, but the timeless work is waiting, surrounding. It's right there too. It's just waiting to be seen. It's just waiting to be loved. And this strikes me as good news.

Cheyenne Boon:

Please rise in body or spirit, and let us pray. Gracious God, thank you for the blessing of waking each morning, for every chance we have to witness the beauty of your creation, and for all the things we might create with your gifts and the gifts of those who came before us. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

Together, let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught us, saying:

Congregation:

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.

Cheyenne Boon:

Now let us sing the hymn Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee, number 23 found in your crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation:

(singing)

Cheyenne Boon:

As we go into this day, let us bless and keep one another. Let us make peace. Let us be at peace. May it be so, and may the church say, "Amen."

Congregation:

Amen.