

Anna Burnham:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

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 8, found on page four. Please remain masked and stand as you are able to read responsibly by the whole verse.

Anna Burnham:

Oh, Lord, our Lord. How majestic is your name throughout the earth, you who have covered the heavens with your splendor.

Congregation:

From the mouths of infants and sucklings, you have founded strength on account of your foes, to put an end to enemy and avenger.

Anna Burnham:

When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that you set in place...

Congregation:

What is man that you have been mindful of him, mortal man, that you have taken note of him?

Anna Burnham:

That you have made him little less than divine and adorned him with glory and majesty.

Congregation:

You have made him master over your handiwork, laying the world at his feet.

Anna Burnham:

Sheep and oxen, all of them, the wild beasts too,

Congregation:

The birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, whatever travels the paths of the seas.

Anna Burnham:

Oh, Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name throughout the earth?

Choir:

(singing)

The Rev. John Finley:

Three short excerpts from Christian scripture. First, from Genesis chapter 12. "The Lord said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you.' And Abram went." Next, from Matthew chapter four. "Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee. He saw two brothers casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come follow me,' Jesus said. At once, they left their nets and followed him." And finally, from the Gospel of Luke, "An angel came unto Mary and said unto her, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' And Mary said, 'Behold the handmaiden of the Lord. Be it unto me, according to thy word.'" Let us pray. May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, oh Lord our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. John Finley:

The Reverend Professor Peter J. Gomes used to tell a story about the chaplain to the British Royal family, who apparently liked to say, "If there's one thing the Queen Mother and I detest, it's name droppers." I however, am shamelessly proud to claim Peter as a dear friend and to say that morning prayers was a home for me when I was an undergraduate. I'm honored to be asked back, and I want to talk to you today about saying yes. One of the great dangers in life is that we become conservative, making compromises to protect ourselves from a life that might otherwise prove Hobbesian, nasty, brutish and short. Seeking safety, we hold back when we should say yes.

When I was a freshman, someone froze to death in Harvard Square. My friends and I heard this as a call, and our response became what is today the Harvard Square Homeless Shelter. Years ago, Scott Seider wrote a book about the shelter entitled Where Harvard Meets the Homeless. In the book, he demonstrates that among other things, the shelter has served generations of Harvard students as a sort of social justice entrepreneurship incubator. For me, work there led to a change in my trajectory, working now with economically disadvantaged children. For my friend, Katya Fels, it led to the creation first of On the Rise, an innovative program for women, and now the Full Frame Initiative. Our friend Ellie Lee made a movie called Repetition Compulsion that launched her career as a filmmaker. Another friend went onto a career in development in the World Bank. More recently, it inspired Sam Greenberg and Sarah Rosenkrantz to start Y2Y, the shelter for homeless youth. So many lives impacted from saying yes.

Marge Piercy ends her poem, To be of Use, with the lines, "A pitcher cries for water to carry, and a person for work that is real." Each of us must have something real to do. Again and again, holy scripture, commends those who answer when called, who immediately drop their nets and dive right in, faithful people who live out the benediction, "May you love God so much that you love nothing else too much, and may you fear God so much that you fear nothing else."

Let me end with a story about a pious man who lived by a river. One day, the river started to flood. As the waters rose, a soldier drove up in a Jeep. "Hop in," he said. "I'll take you to safety." "No," said the man. "I'm trusting in Jesus." The water continued to rise. Two neighbors paddled by in a canoe. "Come aboard," they said. "No," said the man. "I'm trusting in Jesus. Still, the water rose, and a helicopter flew by and dropped a rope ladder. "Grab on," they yelled. "We'll take you to safety." "No," yelled the man.

"I'm trusting in Jesus." When the man drowned, he went to heaven, and he was sopping wet, and he stormed into Jesus' office. "I trusted in you and look what happened to me." "My child," Said Jesus, "I sent you a Jeep and a canoe and a helicopter. What more do you want?" Friends, here we are. What more could we want to say yes?

Let me conclude with a familiar prayer attributed to St. Francis. Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me so love. Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light. Where there is sadness, joy. Oh divine master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen. Now let us say together the prayer that Jesus taught: 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 to temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Anna Burnham:

Please stand as you are able, and together, let us sing the hymn Come Labor On, number 323, found in your crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation:

(singing)

Anna Burnham:

May the Lord bless and keep you. May God's spirit shine upon you. May the peace of Christ wrap your heart, and may the Word of Christ dwell richly within you. And together, let us say amen.

Congregation:

Amen.