

Laurie Sedgwick:

Good morning 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 16, found on page eight.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Preserve me, oh God. For in Thee do I put my trust.

Congregation:

O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord. My goodness extendeth not to thee.

Laurie Sedgwick:

But to the saints that are in the earth and to the excellent in whom is all my delight.

Congregation:

Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god. Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

Laurie Sedgwick:

The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup. Thou maintainest my lot.

Congregation:

The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

Laurie Sedgwick:

I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel. My reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

Congregation:

I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth. My flesh also shall rest in hope.

Congregation:

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Choir:

(singing)

Charles William Bell III:

Good morning, and Aloha, as we say it in Hawaii. A reading from Genesis 28:12.

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth. And the top of it reached to Heaven. And behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

Ten years ago, on the spur of a moment while pursuing a Masters in Civil Engineering at New Jersey Institute of technology, volunteering simultaneously in US Senator Robert Menendez's office and teaching at the Bronx High of the Visual Arts, to make ends meet I took a bus from New York City to Boston to come and see Harvard. I don't remember everything I did, but I do remember celebrating Shabbat at the Halal Center, and walking around and thinking to myself, I would be back.

It was a wild thought to think and a dream to pursue. I think what pushed me to come to Harvard 10 years ago was because, at that time, I was a scout master for Troop 007 in Newark, New Jersey. And as much as I thought I taught them about service, leadership, and striving for the highest, I really wasn't reaching for my highest potential or dreaming big enough.

All my boy scouts came from single parent homes or were first generation Americans. And I knew that the program like the Boy Scouts could change their lives, like it did mine, giving me a mindset of service and wings of hope into becoming an Eagle Scout.

I could also relate to the boys. My mother, too, immigrated from the Philippines and raised three kids on a single income. Those weekly meetings on Wednesdays with the Boy Scouts were some of the best memories and moments in my life. We always started our meetings with a prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance, motto, oath, law, and slogan, and ended with a prayer.

Those boys taught me to be authentic, to teach from the heart, but most importantly, to strive for something greater, to seek a higher potential. Those scouts from Newark, New Jersey, and my mother's love for her new country, made me reach for a higher calling in life. It would be to serve in the US Navy. It has been the best decision I've made so far. It has built off those scouting lessons that I was taught. It has given me unlimited leadership opportunities. It has brought me to over 20 countries in seven years. It has given me reason to pursue the American Dream.

I chose the battle ship, USS Missouri as my enlisted location. The significance of that ship played in international policy was a capstone to ending World War II, though adjacent to it was the USS Arizona, a stark reminder of the perils of war and the blank check those men wrote to their country.

My scout master, Ross Moody, who guided me into becoming an Eagle Scout, was there on a deck under those 16-inch guns and a US flag, raising his right hand as I repeated the same words he said over 60 years ago, before Hawaii became a state, and Guam, where I was born, a territory.

I know some have doubts about what we call the American Dream, claiming that it is fading. Some say that dream for, hoping for, and believing for, something better may only waste your time, a hopeless pursuit. However, from serving in Bahrain and across the Pacific, it was clear that the idea of the American Dream is still alive.

I witness how American leadership, American presence, American ideals, are still sought after in many conversations, across many countries. I saw the credibility of the American Dream, strong. Leaders from

other countries wanted to hear what your voice and your opinion of what is going on and hear success stories of what America is doing to shape the world.

So when asked, I always try to bring it back to simple things I knew were true. It was the fact that a single mother who immigrated from Philippines, raising her son in public schools, could encourage him to take a sacred oath to serve his country and the greatest Navy in the world, and attend the Harvard Kennedy School of Government as a mid-career candidate for a Masters in Public Administration.

Maybe the lesson from one of my favorite economic classes at HKS is not just about marginal propensity to consume, it's the potential propensity to serve. I think that the American Dream lives in the minds and in the souls of the individuals who believe in the sacred covenant, who trust in their dreams, and who take hold of the divine ladder with conviction.

It is so good to be back at Harvard 10 years later. It is an absolute privilege and honor to serve and to be a part of the long Crimson Line. It is also an honor and a privilege to be here with you today.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Won't you please stand with me, and let us pray.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Oh, gracious, gentle Spirit of love, your energy permeates the universe, igniting earth with your goodness, truth, and beauty. Open our minds and hearts to a deeper awareness of our interconnectedness with you, each other, and all creation. May we experience your unique presence with the sacred web of creation. This, in Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Laurie Sedgwick:

And now let us recite together the prayer that Jesus taught us saying...

Unison:

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 Sedgwick:

Let us sing the hymn, On Jordan's Bank, the Baptist Cry. Number 96, found in your crimson Harvard Hymnal.

Congregation:

(singing).

Laurie Sedgwick:

Let us go forth into the world in peace and dedicated to your service, oh Lord. Let us hold fast that which is good, render to no man evil for evil, strengthen the faint-hearted, support the weak, help the needy and the afflicted, honor all beings. Let us love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of his Spirit and may God's blessing be upon us and remain with us always. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.