

Cheyenne Boon:

Good morning. Welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book, Psalm number 165, the last one in the book, on page 84. Please rise in body or spirit, to read responsibly by whole verse.

Cheyenne Boon:

This is my prayer to you, oh, God. Strike at the root of poverty in my own heart.

Congregation:

Give me the strength likely to bear my joys and sorrows.

Cheyenne Boon:

Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.

Congregation:

Give me the strength, never to disown the poor, or bend my knee before insolent might.

Cheyenne Boon:

Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.

Congregation:

And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love.

Choir:

(Singing)

Jim Urquhart:

Good morning. When I got the invitation speak and share a reading here, I was a bit shocked. I'm not a religious person, and I had no idea what I could offer. In terms of inspirational readings, I really had none. You see, I'm a photo journalist by trade and identity, and my world, for the most part, has been dictated by the violence of others. My main beef for the last several years, has been the rise of domestic terrorism and white nationalism here in America. I spend my days in the homes of people that want to see the world pushed further into a place of exclusion. I do this work because of who my family is. I am the son of a mother who is an immigrant from El Salvador, the younger brother to a gay woman, and the older brother to a black man. In my story, I do this work because I see the toll that hate has exacted on my loved ones.

But I also have a family motto that is constantly voicing in my head. It comes from my dad's family, who immigrated from Scotland. The motto in our family crest reads, "Mean well, speak well, and do well." From a young age, it has been pounded into my being, that the world is bigger than me, and it is up to me to do well for the world. This has led me to some of the darkest segments of society, in the hopes of

affecting change. Or at least making sure no one can say that they didn't know about the dangers lurking around the corner.

As I thought about the request more, I remembered an often repeated lesson. It is also taught in the Torah, the Talmud, and the Quran. And also, a moment that was formative for me being here, right now at Harbor.

A bit over a year ago, I sat at a desk alone in a dark hotel room, save for the light of the television, which I wasn't watching. But there was a meal in front of me. I could still smell the hints of pepper spray and teargas residue on my face, my hands, my clothing. It was all over my crumpled body. But at this point, it was mild, enough time had passed. I could also taste the salt of my own tears, each time I took a mouth full of an unexpected home cooked meal, of warm lemon rice chicken soup. I sat, to eat by myself. I was confused, angry, and my heart was crushed. I was broken. I was shattered. This was the evening of January 6th, and I was in a hotel room that I sought refuge in, in Washington, DC, not far from the US Capital.

On my way to the room that night, I passed by others in the lobby, also covered in pepper spray, and also looking like they had rung through the wringer. But we came from different experiences. Many of them wore American flags and red hats. I had on a bullet proof vest under my jacket, a beat up helmet, and cameras hanging off my shoulders, and press credentials around my neck. I had spent the days on the steps of the U.S. Capital, covering the attack that I feared would come. My most close colleagues and I, knew for years of the growing swell of anger in America. We had fought hard for others to please, hear our shouts, our warnings. But no amount of caution to others could have prepared me to witness what took place that day. You and I both know the story now. I'm still struggling with it every day.

After a day of fighting through the mobs to tell that story, and also a day of being completely cut off from the information the rest of the world was getting, via the internet or television, I found myself in the car of a dear colleague, her name's Leah Millis. We had both watched out for each other during the day, got separated for a bit, and then came back together, once the attack seemed to be ending, and communication was now possible.

During that time, I reached out to my loved ones to assure them that I was okay, and to let them know that I loved them. I really needed them to know I loved them in that moment.

Once my girlfriend, Bethany, who is also a photojournalist, and was in Colorado that day, had indeed established I was safe, she quickly began feeding me as much information as possible, as what the state of the country was in. Because she knew, that although I was there at the Capitol, those of us on the ground could not see the big picture, and only knew what was happening in front of us. Leah then offered to give me a ride back to my hotel, to save me the walk alone in the dark, which we knew was not safe that night. Finally, able to relax a bit, the hunger pains began to hit. I asked her if there was somewhere where we could hit a drive-through for a dinner of salty, fast food. Instead, she turned to me and said, "I've got something better for you."

I didn't know it then, but that was the moment I began to become the recipient of the message taught by so many religions and belief systems. The idea that active kindness cannot only save a person, but it can also save the world. At least possibly, the world of the recipient of the kindness. That night, it was me.

We took a detour to her home, and she collected into a large Tupperware dish, the leftovers from her meal, her and her wife had cooked the night before. This was in the time before vaccines, so I sat and waited outside in the car. Then, working our way around police roadblocks, she drove me to my hotel, and kept me in sight until it was clear that I had made it in safely.

And there it was, laid out in front of me, the me, alone by myself in the hotel room, to confront the anger and the pain. But now I had something to hold onto, a home cooked meal. I was hurting, and tired, completely demolished to my core on so many levels. But an act of kindness, of giving me restorative food when I needed it most, the simple act of collecting leftovers for me, let me know just when I need it most, that I am still here. A simple act of kindness not only save saved me that night, but may have also saved my world.

I just hope one day, through a simple act that I may not even be aware of the impact of, I could help save the world for someone else when they need it. One day, maybe I can live up to the example of others, and amend my family's motto, to mean well, speak well, and kindly do well.

Cheyenne Boon:

Please rise in body or spirits and let us pray. Spirit of justice, breathe your truth into all of our relations, all of our institutions, all of our living. Spirit of hope, keep your flame burning in each of us. Let it warm our spirits as it lights the way for our neighbors.

Cheyenne Boon:

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 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:

Let us sing the hymn, Seek Not Afar for Beauty. Number 343 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:

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Amen.