

Anna Burnham:

Good morning. And welcome to morning prayers at Memorial Church. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book, Psalm 67, found on page 34. Please remain masked and stand as you are able to read responsibly by the whole verse.

Anna Burnham:

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us.

Congregation:

That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving power among all nations.

Anna Burnham:

Let the peoples praise thee, oh God. Let all the peoples praise thee.

Congregation:

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for thou dost judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.

Anna Burnham:

Let the peoples praise thee, oh God. Let all the peoples praise thee.

Congregation:

The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us.

Anna Burnham:

God has blessed us. Let all the ends of the earth fear him.

Choir:

(singing)

Manato Jansen:

Good morning. Friends, hear these words from Psalm 139. Oh Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, oh Lord, you know it completely. Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascent to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed and shale, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there, your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me and the lights around me

become night." Even the darkness is not dark to you. The night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you. For it was you who formed my inward parts.

You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works. If you've had the chance in the past week or so to go downtown or to your local grocery store or CVS or even the cafes across the street from Harvard Yard, you've noticed that there are pink and red heart shaped products everywhere. Today is certainly a day of remembering, giving and receiving our love and affection to fellow friends, family, partners, and our many beloved. And that is a beautiful thing. It also perhaps can serve as a day that illuminates the ways in which we might reimagine and expand our understandings of what it looks like to love to our fullest selves. Each of us meeting ourselves where we're at right now. This day can be an invitation of sorts to love amid all that is to be loved.

I grew up in Japan, where we basically have a tradition of two Valentine's Days. The first one, the traditional Valentine's Day on February 14th. And then one month later, White's Day on March 14th. Traditionally, it's expected that on Valentine's Day, it is an opportunity for girls to show that they like a boy. And then on White Day, the men are expected to pay back the women, as sort of an answer to their question. Do you love me? And it's cute, but it also is quite scripted. With its particular gender roles and expectations, it leaves out perhaps everything else that is not heteronormative and a romantic expression of love that expects in return. And we know that love is more than this. And it can be most powerful when it is unscripted. We find in the Christian tradition, a God who loves so fully, that God becomes that which God loves. Christ, fully human among humans, dying for all without expectation or conditions.

And in God's expression of love, where God becomes one with us, we are seen. Psalm 139 is a beautiful expression of this, of how we are seen and known and be held by God. You know when I sit down and rise up. You search my path in the brightest heaven, in the deepest depths, in the farthest limits of the sea, you are there. For we are each fearfully and wonderfully made. I invite you to think of a recent moment in which you felt seen by another. How truly vital it is in our journeys of loving and being loved to see and be seen. Father Greg Boyle offers us this image, that I feel like I use a lot. God has only one thing on her mind and that is to drop, endlessly, rose petals on our heads. Behold the one who can't take his eyes off of you. And in the upper Basilica of Assisi, Italy, sits a bronze statue of St. Francis, the devoted patron saint of animals and the environment.

And this particular statue of Saint Francis can't take his eyes off of the dirt beneath him. He's gazing beneath him in awe and wonder at the ground that replenishes and cultivate. And this is love too. And perhaps it feels especially pertinent as we face an overwhelming reality of climate collapsing around the world. So on this day, when particular scripts of love might dominate our wider expressions of seeing and beholding that which we might be called to, may the vastness of our expressions of love, each one sacred be held today. Invite yourselves to wonder, "What might I be called to love so fully today, that I may become one with it? What shall be seen and loved by me today?" Whether it is something of the vast natural world around us or the love of a fellow person, and the wonder of to behold a part of them that we do not yet know.

Or for many of us who know the feeling of rejection, abandonment, abuse, and harm in the name of love today, may you behold the miracle that you undoubtedly are. As God, unconditionally, sees you fearfully and wonderfully made. Together, let's pray. Holy one of all walks of life and moments, presence of light and companion in our darkness. We are grateful for this time to be together. Behold us as we are, as we go forth expressing and encountering love in our many ways, in hope, in admiration, in wonder, and also in our hesitancy, anger, grief, and mourning. We hold all that love that leads us to feel as one body. As this day may bring joy for the ones we have with us. We acknowledge the pain of those we miss dearly. Loving God, here are prayers, lead us in love, strengthened, supported, help us breathe, bless and be blessed and challenged with each encounter in this big world coming.

Anna Burnham:

Please stand as you are able and together let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught us. 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, and the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

Congregation:

(Singing)