

Theresa Lungu:

Good morning, and welcome to morning prayers at the Memorial Church. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton psalter book, and Psalm number 80 can be found on page 40. Please stand as you're able, to read responsively by whole verse.

Theresa Lungu:

Hear, O thou shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a sheep, shew thyself also, thou that sittest upon the cherubims.

Congregation:

Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh: stir up thy strength, and come, and help us.

Theresa Lungu:

Turn us again, O God: shew the light of thou countenance, and we shall be whole.

Congregation:

O Lord God of hosts: how long wilt thou be angry with thy people that prayeth?

Theresa Lungu:

Thou feedest them with the bread of tears: and give us them plenteousness of tears to drink.

Congregation:

Thou hast made us a very strife unto our neighbors: and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

Theresa Lungu:

Turn us again, thou God of hosts: shew the light of thy countenance, and we shall be whole.

Congregation:

Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

Theresa Lungu:

Turn thee again, thou God of hosts, look down from heaven: behold, and visit this vine.

Congregation:

Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts: shew the light of thy countenance, and we shall be whole.

Choir:

(singing)

Anna Del Castillo:

Good morning, everyone.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Anna Del Castillo:

It's such a joy and gift to be with you all in this church, which has been such a spiritual home for me during my four years at Harvard. My name is Anna Del Castillo, and I am a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, class of 2021, where I received my Master of Divinity, focused on racial justice and healing.

This year, I've had the privilege of staying on campus, and working closely with writer, educator, activist, spiritual guide, and my dearest old friend, Terry Tempest Williams. In the fall, Terry and I created a fire salon, a space for community processing, where students from across the university gathered to grapple with climate grief, and to try and make sense of this moment in history, together around a fire and beloved community.

The fire salon transformed into a class this spring called, Finding Beauty in a Broken World, bearing witness through writing in place. As a teacher of this course, I find myself struggling to answer these questions. How do we find beauty in a broken world? What does it mean to bear witness?

In the midst of climate catastrophe, children and families caged at our southern border, bomb threats sent to historically black colleges and universities, the COVID 19 pandemic shining an unforgiving light on the world's most vulnerable and marginal people, I sometimes find myself walking across this campus, unable to make sense of brokenness, and gasping for glimpses of beauty, for answers from God. Answers. Certainty. Don't we all endlessly search for them? In my busy Google-filled calendar, quest for answers, a dear friend from the fire salon, who's here this morning, recently gifted me, Rainer Maria Rilke's, Letters to a Young Poet. It's a very short book composed of 10 letters written by the Austrian poet in the early 1900s.

In an 1903 letter to his 19 year old prodigy, Rilke writes, "I want to beg you, as much as I can dear sir, to be patient towards all that is unsolved in your heart. And to try to love the questions themselves, like flocked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers which cannot be given to you, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now, perhaps you will then, gradually without noticing it, live along some distant day and to the answers."

Live everything. Live the questions now. I think Rilke was onto something. So to you, these beautiful faces in this beautiful church, gathered here on the 17th day of the second month in the year, 2022, I invite you to pause, to remember your divinity. To leave this place this morning, living the questions, rather than seeking the answers. Because maybe, if we tether ourselves to beloved community, if we spend some more time outside by a fire, dreaming up liberation, dreaming up the better world that is possible, maybe, just maybe, without even noticing, we will live into the answer.

So if you feel comfortable, please join me in prayerful meditation. If you want to bow your head, or close your eyes, or do whatever makes you feel comfortable.

Creator, thank you for this morning. Thank you for the gift of the air that fills our lungs. Thank you for this moment of pause, before we transition into busy days. Creator, we pray for the protection of this planet and its creatures. May you protect us, and bring us peace as we live into the questions. Amen.

Theresa Lungu:

Please stand as you are able, and let us recite the Lord's prayer together.

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.

Theresa Lungu:

Together, let us sing to God with gladness, singing number 30, in the crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation:

(singing)

Theresa Lungu:

Thank you for joining us this morning. And as we go forth into this day, may the beginning of a new day renew our hearts with God's strength and purpose. May our errors of yesterday be forgiven, and let us walk closer in God's ways today. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.