

Cheyenne Boon:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Cheyenne Boon::

Welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book. Psalm number 20 found on page 10. Please rise in body or spirit, to read responsibly by whole verse. May the most high answer you in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend you.

Congregation:

Send you help from the holy place and strengthen you out of Zion.

Cheyenne Boon:

Remember all your offerings and accept your burnt sacrifice.

Congregation:

Grant you your heart's desire, and prosper all your plans.

Cheyenne Boon:

We will shout for joy at your victory and triumph in the name of our God. May the most high grant all your requests.

Congregation:

Now I know that God gives victory to the anointed one. Out of the holy heaven God will answer, with a strong and victorious right hand.

Cheyenne Boon:

Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will call upon the name of our God.

Congregation:

They collapse and fall down, but we will arise and stand upright.

Cheyenne Boon:

Oh God, give victory to our sovereign and answer us when we call.

Choir:

(Singing).

Sharon Rose Christner:

Good morning, you all.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Sharon Rose Christner:

Here's a reading from John 14, and it's Jesus talking. "My father's house has many rooms. If that were not so, would I have told you that I'm going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

Sometimes, while I'm walking around campus at night, I stop to see my friend Chip, who lives in an alleyway about two blocks from here. We've talked mostly about coffee and Hebrew, which makes me think that he would fit in just fine at divinity school. His consistent presence brings life to the place. I think about Chip, and the temperature of the air, and the long wait for section eight housing. And always my mind pans over the academic and office buildings of our beautiful university as they exist in the night, a huge mountainous citadel of pristine, ornate, heated, comfortable, empty buildings, rooms upon rooms guarded against use. And I think about how kingdom of heaven is not very much like that. Lord, hear our prayer.

My friend Maria lives in a hallway of the largest area hospital in Europe. She sleeps sitting up on a set of bright blue plastic waiting room chairs, folded to the wall, under flickering fluorescent lights in the dead end of the hospital labyrinth. Her grandmotherly greetings make the place somehow warm and good. There are dozens of others sleeping there too, because it is warmer than being outside, And because no one generally comes and tells them to leave. But people do complain. It's the same controversy as everywhere. The concern of security and sanitation, liability and institutional self-protection. This is not the place, comes the refrain. This is not ideal.

No, it is not ideal. But without this limited non-ideal mercy, there would remain one pristine, non-labile, empty hospital, and perhaps a 100 more people out like flung stars in the dark, attempting to survive terrain far less hospitable to human life. Lord, hear our prayer.

I have a friend named Anna, who lives in a Vatican palace that overlooks Saint Peter's Basilica and the colonnades in the square. This place has archways, terraces, murals, everything, and Anna's jokes and stories make the place even more beautiful. Her favorite story to tell is of how she came to live in the place of the queen after years of sleeping in the doorways of grocery stores. The palace was going to be used as a luxury hotel, which was the obvious, tidy, and lucrative option. But the Pope intervened and opened its doors to people who didn't have another place to be, many of whom had been making their lives just outside its doors.

There is one more friend I have in mind, and he makes a way to live in parts of me that I didn't think were inhabitable. Places I wasn't quite comfortable letting him into. And by living there, he makes it beautiful. And all the time he is preparing places for us, too. And when my friend Jesus makes places for us, it is not like the places that protect themselves. When you come to the door of his place, he is not going to ask you to leave, citing policies or pointing out the mess you might make. He has already broken the protocols of nature, time, and consequence to come love you.

He is not going to say he cannot be held liable. He has already been held liable. He is not going to say, "This is my father's house, it's not up to me." He is not going to say, "This is not the most appropriate time and place." He is not going to say, "We will review your application," and he is not going to consult his lawyers. While you are still far off, he is going to see you and run toward you and throw his arms around you. And when you try to tell him about your inadequacy, he will be busy finding you beautiful things to wear and calling for a celebration. When you get lost in the dark, he is going to drop everything to go and find you. And not just once, he will do this new every morning. He is not going to leave you. He is going to prepare a place for you.

Let's pray. Lord, as we are longing to offer welcome to our neighbors in Ukraine who are being forced from their homes, help us begin to prepare places for them. Help us to choose mercy over our norms, comforts, and hoardings. Show us how to give the kind of welcome and mercy that opens us up to risk and complication, knowing that you are showing us more mercy than we could ask for or imagine every morning. In Jesus name, amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

And now if you would please rise in body or spirits and together, let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught us saying...

Cheyenne Boon/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 thy is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

And now let us sing hymn number 47, New Every Morning Is The Love, found 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:

Amen.