

Laurie Sedgwick:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Laurie Sedgwick:

And welcome to morning prayers. And just a reminder that we won't have morning prayers next week because it's spring break. This morning's responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter is Psalm number 37 found on page 19. And please stand as you are able for our responsive reading. Fret not yourself because of the wicked, be not envious of wrongdoers.

Congregation:

For they soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Trust in the Lord and do good so you will dwell in the land and enjoy security.

Congregation:

Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Laurie Sedgwick:

The wicked borrows and cannot pay back but the righteous is generous and gives.

Congregation:

For those blessed by the Lord shall possess the land but those cursed by Him shall be cut off.

Laurie Sedgwick:

I have been young and now am old yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or His children begging bread.

Congregation:

He is ever giving and lending and His children become the blessing.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Depart from evil and do good so shall you abide forever.

Congregation:

For the Lord loves justice, He will not forsake His saints.

Laurie Sedgwick:

The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord and He is their refuge in the time of trouble.

Congregation:

The Lord helps them and delivers them. He delivers them from the wicked and saves them because they take refuge in Him.

Choir:

(singing)

jessica young chang:

A reading from the book of Job, the 13th chapter, starting at the 15th verse. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." When I worked last summer as a chaplain intern, my supervisor taught me that when praying with a patient to ask, what shall we pray for today? I can't assume that because they're in the hospital, I know what they want from God. I think about that question, what am I praying for today a lot lately. It's timely that it's on my mind a week into Lent. Some of us are moving into this season of penitence, reflection, abstinence and deepening spiritual practice. But why? Does some part of me hope that if my fast or abstinence is ardent enough, if my devotion is sincere enough, God will answer my prayers?

I don't know about you loved one but I am praying for a lot right now. For the health of my loved ones who are aging poorly. I'm praying that my friends are accepted into their top choice PhD programs. For clarity on my own right next move and the same for my beloved. For justice for my siblings who keep losing our lives to agents of white supremacy. I'm praying for trans youth and the families who are criminalized for loving and affirming them. I'm praying that Russia would stop dropping bombs on Ukraine and that displace refugees, Afghan, Ukrainian, Palestinian might be received with generosity and kindness and understanding What do you pray for? Who are you praying for? What does it mean if the thing for which we pray goes differently than our prayers? Maybe it means we weren't praying hard enough. Maybe it's a divine comment on the quality or tenacity of our faith. Deeper than this, if our faith only exists as a doorway to us getting what we want, what is it really worth?

I don't know the will of God. Not because God is holy and inscrutable though God may be these things, but because God hasn't shared all of their will with me. I don't know if the things I pray for are the things God wants for me. I think of contemplative and writer, Thomas Merton about whom I learned from my advisor and former Mem Church minister, Stephanie Paulsell. Merton prays, "The fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you." I think a 14th century English mystic theologian and subject of my master's thesis, Julian of Norwich about whom I learned from our current Mem Church minister, Matthew Potts. Julian prays, "Lord, you know what I want. And if it is not your will good Lord, do not be displeased for I only what you want."

These thinkers teach me that perhaps the best possible outcome of prayer is not the new job or the doctoral program, not the healing or the miracle. Perhaps the best possible outcome is intimacy with spirit, the closeness we have most keenly and sustainably when we acknowledge our need, our tenderness and smallness to they who hung the stars in the sky and put breath in our lungs and who will one day be present when the rhythm of our breath ceases. I woke up early recently, like early, early thinking about what I would say this morning and a verse I never think of suggested itself to me over and over. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him? This is an intimacy, a surrender that is a tall order. We

would give our desire for health, wellness and prosperity over to the outcome God seeks for us even if it means our death, our disintegration.

I don't know if we will ever be capable of this level of intimacy or surrender in our lifetimes. I don't even know if it's a desirable model but we can pray about it right? Will you join? God who hears, God who knows, what a gift to remember that you walk and roll and crawl and kneel and prostrate and sob and skip and rejoice with us in all moments of our lives. God, you know what we want, you know what we need. Meet us where we are and abide with us as we go. Soften our hearts and transform our minds.

Hear and grant us our petitions. And if you will not God then be with us in the midst of our confusion, our struggle and frustration so that we may move ever closer to oneness with you. Remembering now the words of your child and our sibling and teacher Jesus, we pray. 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 forever, amen.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Please stand as you are able and let us sing awake, awake to love and work. Number 46 found in your crimson Harvard Hymn book.

Congregation:

(singing)

Laurie Sedgwick:

God of love show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all creatures of this earth for not one of them is forgotten in your sight. Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak and care for this world in which we live. Lord, the poor and the people of Ukraine are crying out, seize us with your power and light, help us protect all life to prepare for a better future for the coming of your kingdom of justice, peace, love and beauty. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.