

Laurie Sedgwick:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Laurie Sedgwick:

And welcome to morning prayers. Please stand, as you are able, for our responsive reading from the Black Appleton Psalter Book. This morning, we'll be reading Psalm 104, found on page 52.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Bless the Lord, oh my soul, of Lord, my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty.

Congregation:

Wrapped in light as with a garment. You stretch out the heavens like a tent.

Laurie Sedgwick:

You set the beams of your chambers on the waters. You make the clouds your chariot. You ride on the wings of the wind.

Congregation:

You make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers.

Laurie Sedgwick:

You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken.

Congregation:

You cover it with the deep as with garments. The water stood above mountains.

Laurie Sedgwick:

At your rebuke, they flee. At the sound of your thunder, they take to flight.

Congregation:

They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys, to the place that you appointed to them.

Laurie Sedgwick:

May the glory of the Lord endure forever. May the Lord rejoice in His works.

Congregation:

Who looks on the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke.

Choir:

(singing)

Yaseen Hashmi:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good Morning.

Yaseen Hashmi:

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said that, "Nobody suspects the days to be gods." And if you're anything like me, you're probably like, "Yeah, Ralph. Why would we suspect that? I mean, days are days, and God is God." And secondly, that plural in, "days," is a little bit tricky for monotheists like me, a Muslim.

But, I think there is value in this quote and in this idea, how we relate to our day says a lot about how we relate to God. Our days bring us reasons for mercy, and our days bring us mercy. Our days give us reasons for gratitude, and our days give us gratitude. Our days also give us frustrations and exhaustions. In our routines, we find monotony and also raw, abundant potential in every crack, in every whoopsy-daisy of the day.

So, today, I'd like to share a hadith to help us think about our day. A hadith is a narration about something the Prophet Muhammad said or did that we Muslims look to for guidance. It goes something like this:

Two companions of the Prophet once approached him with their fingers in their ears, and he asked why. He had heard rumors that this had been happening, and he had to keep being like, "That's not something I asked for." So when they came like that, he said, "What have you been doing?" They say, "Well, to come to you, we have to walk through the market, and the market is full of distractions, and it's full of a lot of vulgar things happening. You got animal waste, animals running up to you. You got kids all over the place," and they wanted their undivided attention on the prophet while they're on their way to the prophet.

And this is an interesting hadith because hadiths are usually used to figure out laws. You figure out the Prophet's response to some sort of spontaneous situation and you think, "Well, there's our example, and that's how we're going to sort of reason through this." Analogously usually. But this is a funny hadith, because his verdict is like, "This is permissible, but can you really live like that?"

As somebody who likes to take any leeway I can get, I love that this is permissible. And then, I take the, "Can live like that," as a challenge. I'm someone, if I don't leave the house without my headphones, I might as well throw the day in the trash. So I do walk around like this a lot, but the question of how to manage our attention is not an easy one, and it has ethical standing.

Just this morning, we were talking about the question of Russia's invasion on Ukraine, and the, "unequal divides on our mind to share that we have," as Laurie put it. So, the mind share, the attention. It's tricky. I was recently rushing down the escalator at the Porter Square T stop. I was late to see my friends. I could hear a train approaching. And so, I just booked it. And I was muttering. I was going, "Excuse me,

excuse me, excuse me, excuse me." I had my headphones on, and I bumped into a guy who was also wearing big Beats, big headphones. And he didn't like that, and he let me know.

I ended up missing that train, and he kind of asked me, "What do you think you're doing?" And my honest answer is that I wasn't paying attention. That's a truthful answer, but I don't know that it's a good one. I didn't want to keep my friends waiting, but it's not like my friends are the Prophet, with all due respect. No, but what we pay attention to really determines a lot about our day, sacred and profane.

Another time, I was watching a reality show called Hype House, a couple weeks ago. It's about these young social media stars that live together, and their fame and fortune is based on an algorithm that's, itself, based on the aggregate time people spend paying attention to them. So, this led a friend of mine to observe that attention is capital.

That we are deeply embedded in economies of attention isn't really news on a university campus. The tea, coffee, and maybe Adderall and Ritalin coursing through many of our veins this Monday morning is a testament to the instrumentalization of our body's capacity for attention. And that can be okay. I'm not trying to say that attention is, itself, sacred and can't be touched by outside things. I want to, instead, propose that our attention has the capacity to sacralized.

Especially in a time when our eyes can create idols, there is no such thing as a passive spectator. And so, to bear witness is an immensely generative act. It has a lot to do with paying attention. Between human beings, too much of love is about noticing. You know, when you have a crush, you notice how they laugh. You notice things like how they drink water. And in Islam, when you become a Muslim, the first sort of step is a big bearing of witness. It's called the Shahada. And instead of saying ... You know, people translate to say, "I believe there is one God and that Muhammad is His prophet," but the proper way to look at Shahada, what it means is a bearing of witness. "I bear witness that there is one God, Muhammad is His prophet."

So, bearing witness is a ... It's key to the Muslim worldview. We come to understand God through His creation, a lot like a lover. We see the lover's glass of water, and we hear their laugh, but we don't actually see the lover. We have hints everywhere at God and what He's created, and bearing witness is a kind of loving attention. Worship is a kind of loving attention. Attention mediates our relationship with our loved ones as it mediates our relationship with the divine. Attention also mediates our relationship with TikTok teens and strangers on the escalator.

The day is spontaneous and confusing, and it's hard to figure out how to act. To maybe look for one answer, I bring in another hadith, and I talk about this hadith all the time. This is my first time preaching, but it's not my first time being preachy.

The Prophet once said that, "If you're planting seeds when the hour comes," the hour being the apocalypse, the end of the world, "you have a seed in your hand. Plant that seed." I bring this up all the time. I think it's one of those evergreen things to think about. In this case, I would like to say that

cultivation here is inherently virtuous, right? It isn't about what that seed becomes. The world is ending, and we know nothing about time, right? But the seed is in your hand, you have to still plant it.

A lot of times, the consequences are foreclosed, but when you plant the seed, you can plant it tenderly and you can plant it with care. And it's in your hand anyways. So, I propose that our attention is a seed in our hand, and our day is more fertile than we can imagine. Please plant tenderly, and don't worry about the fruit. Tomorrow isn't promised, but today is miraculous.

So, I'd like to offer up some prayer too, if you can join me in it. I don't know. When Muslims do it, we all do this, but you can do whatever you want. I'm not even looking. I just want to thank God for His gift of our day today. I'd like to thank Him for the food and the water we get to share. I'd like to thank you for the shelter and the hospitality. I'd like to thank you for the guides that you've put in our lives, the people that have shaped us, whether or not they know it. I'd like to ask you to please share with them the blessings and the benefit that I've gotten from them. Please, God, protect our families. Please, God, keep us safe, and please, God, keep us on the right path in pursuit of loving you better. Thank you.

And now, will you please stand and let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us saying, "Our Father who are 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."

Laurie Sedgwick:

Let us sing the hymn, I To The Hills Will Lift Mine Eyes, number 200 found in your Crimson Harvard Hymnal.

Choir/Congregation:

(singing)

Laurie Sedgwick:

May today there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use those gifts that you have received and pass on the love that has been given to you. May you be confident knowing that you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.