

Theresa Lungu:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Theresa Lungu:

Welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with the responsive reading from the black Appleton psalter book, psalm number 119, found on page 60. Please stand as you're able to read responsively by whole verse. Happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord.

Congregation:

Happy are those who keep his decrees, who seek him with their whole heart.

Theresa Lungu:

Who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways.

Congregation:

You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently.

Theresa Lungu:

Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes.

Congregation:

Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.

Theresa Lungu:

Let my cry come before you, oh Lord. Give me understanding according to your Word.

Congregation:

Let my supplication come before you. Deliver me according to your promise.

Theresa Lungu:

My lips will pour forth praise because you teach me your statutes.

Congregation:

My tongue will sing of your promise, for all your commandments are right.

Theresa Lungu:

Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts.

Congregation:

I long for your salvation, oh Lord, and your law is my delight.

Theresa Lungu:

Let me live that I may praise you, and let your ordinances help me.

Congregation:

I have gone astray like a lost sheep. Seek out your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.

Chior:

(singing)

Liam Simons:

A lesson from The Gospel According to Matthew. Chapter 22, beginning at the 34th verse. Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question. "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" Jesus replied, "Love your Lord, your God, with all of your heart and with all of your soul and all of your mind. This is the first and the greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments." Here ends the lesson. Good morning, everyone.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Liam Simons:

Good morning. My name is Liam and I am now a senior at the college in my final semester, and I've had the pleasure of being involved with the Memorial Church. Since September of my freshman year, I live just over there in Canaday Hall. And I remember my freshman year, I was able to leave my dorm about 10:56 in the morning and make it here on time, which was great. Since then, I have had the opportunity to be a part of the church's Student Advisory Board, and more recently to work as a Sunday school teacher under the direction of the Reverend Calvin Jones, which I can say without question is one of the favorite parts of my week. I have enjoyed my connection with this church and am grateful for it, and am blessed to say that I've grown greatly in my faith while here at Harvard.

While I have become close with other undergraduates through Memorial Church, I will say that many of my friends, particularly my closest friends, are not really religious whatsoever, and some are even skeptical of organized religion. As such, I've had the unique experience, and it's really been a wonderful experience, of discussing religion, particularly Christianity, with college students who know very little about it and often wonder why I'm up so early on Sunday mornings. I don't really blame my friends for their confusion or even their hesitation with regard to Christianity. From the outside, I can understand how the faith can seem daunting. The body of Christianity is composed of many different branches and sects, all of which seem to have slightly different practices, beliefs and guiding values.

The point about guiding values is particularly important and underlies a question that I've been asked a good few times by some of my peers. The question, the wording is always a little different, but it's something along the lines of this. "Well, so you're a Christian. What are the rules?" It's a difficult question, and it's one that's really been discussed and debated for centuries. The most honest answer would probably be something along the lines of, "Well, it depends who you ask." But I know that's not

really a compelling answer, and so I try to do a little bit better. When I've been asked the question, what I try to do is reference the passage that I read for you just a couple of moments ago.

In this passage from Matthew, Jesus is asked a question not too different from the one that I've been asked. Which is the greatest commandment? What are the core rules of Christianity? Jesus' answer is twofold. Number one, love the Lord, your God, with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your mind. Then number two, love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus then offers us an important takeaway. All of the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.

I particularly enjoy this final line. It's like Jesus is saying to us, "Yes, the gospel does offer many lessons. All of these lessons are important, but in the end they really just boil to loving your God and then loving your neighbor. If you can be dedicated to loving your God and loving your neighbor, then you can never really get too far off track." That is what I say to my friends. That is what it means to be Christian. Christians should love their God and love their neighbors. If you can remember these two commandments, then you're in great shape. Everything else about Christianity, all of the norms and the practices and the intricacies that puzzle my friends and really puzzle many others through the years can be summed up by these two beautiful ideas. So as we go forth in our lives today and every day, I pray that we all remain devoted to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Let us love our God and love each other, because at the end of the day, that's really what this is all about. Thank you very much.

Theresa Lungu:

Please stand and you're able and let us pray. Eternal God, grant to us this and every day such readiness and delight in following Christ that whether our lives are short or long, we shall have lived abundantly. And please join me in reciting the Lord's Prayer, saying:

All:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done 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:

And now let us sing the hymn Love is kind and Suffers Long, number 331 in the crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation/Choir:

(singing).

Theresa Lungu:

As we go forth into this day, Lord, grant us the strength to do what has to be done today, and the wisdom to calmly leave on the side what cannot be done. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

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Congregation:

(silence)