

Cheyenne Boon:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Cheyenne Boon:

Welcome to Morning Prayers. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from your Black Appleton Psalter Book. Psalm number two, found on page one. Please rise in body or spirit to read responsively by whole verse.

Cheyenne Boon:

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and his anointed, saying.

Congregation:

The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and his anointed, saying.

Cheyenne Boon:

Let us burst their bonds asunder and cast their cords from us. He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord has them in derision.

Congregation:

He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord has them in derision.

Cheyenne Boon:

Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury saying, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

Congregation:

I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

Cheyenne Boon:

I will tell of the decree of the Lord. He said to me, you are my son. Today, I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

Congregation:

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

Cheyenne Boon:

You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Now therefore, O kings, be wise, be warned, O rulers of the earth.

Congregation:

Now therefore, O kings, be wise, be warned, O rulers of the earth.

Choir:

(singing)

Cheyenne Boon:

Our reading this morning comes from an interview with the writer Barry Lopez, published in December 2019. When asked to reflect on justice and reconciliation, Lopez says, "Myself, I've got to get to a place where I can accept what Stalin did to people in the Siberian gulags, the scale of it. This too is us. This is what we do." He says, "That's why I told my grandson. As we stood over the wreckage of a battleship at Pearl Harbor, 'This is what we do.' He had no idea that we killed each other on that scale, but I could say to him, I love you and I want you to know that this is what we do. And as you grow, you will see a way to help. And I hope that when you do, you choose that path, no matter how hard it is."

Some of you may remember, a Faith In Life Forum offered last semester by the Reverend Elam Jones, on the Sunday before Veterans Day. He invited us to consider what it means to house a war memorial in a Church, or perhaps to house a Church in a war memorial. What is it that we wish to memorialize here? Does a monument to war glorify violence? Or is this building a call for peace? Before we heard from Reverend Jones, I never thought to ask those questions. The first time I walked into this sanctuary for worship, it was Barry Lopez I heard in my mind. I looked around the walls of our Church and it was clear to me that it was built as a memorial to one more and then another one needed to be added, and another one and another one. And we could add more if we wanted. Some aren't even on the walls yet.

I saw all the names of the dead for the first time and I thought, "This is what we do." And it's easy perhaps, if you live a life like mine, to forget that. Even now, when parts of our world are at war, when people not so unlike me are learning to make Molotov Cocktails in former dance halls, my life continues on, mostly unchanged. But it's not simply that the violence of war is not often front of mind for me. It's also easy to forget that I personally, that each of us is capable of the kind of violence that took the lives of the people named on these walls.

I mean this in the sense that we are people and the people we honor here were killed by people who were just as human as we are. When the circumstances of our lives point us toward violence, we hurt each other sometimes. "This too is us. This is what we do." So if the question, "Why have a war memorial at all?" Is answered by the first part of what Barry Lopez says that, "This is us," then the question, why a war memorial in a Church, is answered by what Lopez says next to his grandson. "As you grow, you will see a way to help."

Church, I hope, is one place we go to find that way, to discover the work being asked of us in this life, to find the courage to act on what we know and the resilience to keep at it, when we're not sure if we'll succeed, to find support in community and in the spirit of God. And at its best, the work we do together in this Church, our worship and our prayer, our hospitality and our conversation is itself a kind of help. It is work that moves us towards the best ways we know to be together, toward justice and peace and away from the worst things we are capable of. What we do here, all of us, if we do it well, has the

potential to remake a tiny piece of our world. Maybe too, if we're lucky, into something more like the Kingdom of God.

Would you pray with me? God of justice, God of mercy, You called us to love our enemies as You called us to love our neighbors. The news each day reminds us that we have not done so. Forgive us, O Lord for the ways we are complicit, even in the violence we do not understand. Be with all those whose lives are marked by violence, both its victims and its perpetrators. Lead us to see in ourselves and each other no more and no less than people. Help us to accept all that we and others are capable of. Call us to something good, that we might be of help in this world so in need of a new way. Grant us Thy peace. Grant us Thy peace. Grant us Thy peace. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

Now, if you would please rise in body or spirit, and let us pray together as Jesus taught us, saying, 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 forever. Amen.

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 forever. Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

And now, we'll sing Hymn number 298, O Thou Who Camest From Above.

Choir/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.