

Cheyenne Boon:

Good morning. Welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book. Psalm number 72 found on page 36. Please rise, in body or spirits to read responsively by whole verse.

Cheyenne Boon:

Give the king the thy justice, oh God, and by righteousness to the royal son.

Congregation:

May he judge thy people with righteousness and thy poor with justice.

Cheyenne Boon:

Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people and the Hills in righteousness.

Congregation:

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor. May he live while the sun endures and as long as the moon throughout all generations.

Cheyenne Boon:

May he be like the rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

Congregation:

In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound till the moon be no more.

Cheyenne Boon:

May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

Congregation:

May all Kings fall down before him, all nations serve him, for who delivers the needy when he calls the poor and him who has no hope.

Choir:

(Singing).

Francis X. Clooney J.S.:

Our reading this morning is from the Gospel according to St. Luke, chapter 22. "After seizing Jesus, they led him away and took him into the house with the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. A serving girl saw him seated there by the fire. And she looked closely at him and said, 'This man was with him,' but Peter denied it, 'Woman, I don't know the man.' A little later, somebody else saw him and said, 'You too are one of them.' 'Man, I am not one of them,' Peter replied. An hour or later, still in the night another asserted, 'Certainly this fellow was with him. He's a Galilean.' And Peter replied, 'I don't know what you're talking about.'"

"And just as he was speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter, who then remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him, 'Before the cock crows in the early morning, you will disown me three times.' And Peter went out and wept bitterly. Still in the dark, the men guarding Jesus began to mock him and beat him. They blindfolded him. They demanded 'Prophecy, who hit you?' And they said many other insulting things to him. When finally it long last, the dawn came. The assembly of the elders of the people, the chief priest and scribes gathered together and they dragged him into their council and they questioned him harshly. And after that, the assembly rose and took him off to Pilate.

When I gratefully received the invitation to come here on Good Friday and be here on this solemn morning in this solemn [inaudible 00:10:51] period, I began at first to think, "Well, nothing happened on Good Friday, early in the morning. The great events were last night, the last supper, of the garden, great and terrible events to follow with Pilate, the path to Calvary, the crucifixion, the death. But in the morning, nothing much." But the more I thought about it, the more I began to realize that indeed something did happen in that terrible dark of the morning. Jesus was arrested. The drama was over. His disciples all fled in their own direction. Only Peter stayed with him. But as we heard Peter, three times said, "I don't know the man." And he ran away and wept bitterly.

In the same night Judas realized what he had done, and he goes out and hangs himself. And Jesus is there tied up, perhaps thrown in a small dark room. He's there and they come and they mock him and they slap him. They make a fool of him. And I was thinking, "What would it be like to be Jesus at that point?" The high point of the last supper, the high point of the garden, things that we're familiar with, but to be there alone in the dark, realizing decisions you have made, perhaps being tempted to bargain your way out, to regret what you've done and say, "Maybe it can be different when the dawn comes and the sun rises." And that moment in the sleepless night, which surely Jesus did not sleep, he is there pondering what he has done, pondering that it's probably too late to change anything and not really knowing how things will play out in the rest of the day. This too is part of the passion of the Lord. Those moments, when all have abandoned him, when he is there, when nothing is to be done, but in the dark before the dawn, before the sun rises, he's confronting the hard realities of who he is and what he has done.

I think here, obviously there is a lesson for you and me as well in this holy season. First of all, to be mindful of the women and men throughout the world who are in that situation right now. Yes, those who are in prison. Yes, those who are suffering violence. Yes, those who are dispossessed. Yes, those who are suffering from COVID or other kinds of isolation. Yes, those who are ostracized and those who have made brave decisions in their life, decisions to go forward with what they think to be true and real refusing to turn back, refusing to lie, refusing to bargain their way out, and then suddenly waking up

early in the morning and saying, "My God, what have I done? Is it too late to get out of this?" And in that sleepless dark of the morning when the sun never seems to rise, to be facing up to the fact, again, even as we are here in the brightness of the sunlight, to be there, these men and women in every country and probably in Cambridge itself saying, "Can I stick with this? Can I keep the faith? Can I be brave enough not to turn away from what the Lord has given me?"

We were reminded on this morning, Jesus in the dark, Jesus facing an uncertain future of our sisters and brothers who are in the same situation. And I suppose we're also asked to think about ourselves. For surely, if you're like me, there are times when you can't sleep. There are times when you wake up early in the morning and sort of say to yourself, "My God, what have I done? I've made a choice. I've decided to live in a certain way. I'm trying to do my best, but isn't it in the cold dark of the night when no one is around to comfort, no distractions. Isn't it too late for me to get out of this? How can I possibly get up in the morning and do it again this day?"

And I think in the strange way, there's hopelessness of Jesus at this moment where everything is lost and everything is gone and he can't get out of it, should be a consolation for us, that when we are alone in the dark, when we have made brave choices and will not back out of them, when others abandon us, when some betray us, when some mock us and hurt us as Jesus was there in the dark and kept to his mission, kept to what the Lord had called him to. We are not alone in our darkness, our early morning, but we are with him. He is with us. So in the dark, on the day with little consolation, let us be thankful that as the Lord in his loneliness did not betray his mission, when we are tempted in the night to betray or run away from our calling, that the Lord will be there to help us to move forward.

Reading a prayer based on the lamentations of Jeremiah chapter 3, "I suffered affliction under the rod of the Lord's wrath. He drove me away. He made me walk in darkness rather than in light. Against me alone he turned his hand again and again all day and all night long, he made my flesh and my skin grow old. He broke my bones. He besieged me. He enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation. He made me dwell in darkness like those long dead, but this I call to mind and therefore I have hope. Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed. His compassion will not fail. His love will be new. Even as the morning that finally comes, his faithfulness will be great. It is good to bear this yoke for now, to sit alone in silences, all alone when the Lord has laid this upon us. Though darkness remains for now, the Lord will not stay away from us forever." Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

Please rise in body or spirit and join in reciting the prayer that 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 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. Please join in singing hymn number 151, in you Black Appleton Psalter Book

Congregation/Choir:

(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.