

Laurie Sedgwick:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Welcome to Morning Prayers. Please stand as you are able for our responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter. This morning we'll be reading Psalm 15 found on page eight. "Oh God, who may dwell in your tabernacle? Who may abide upon your holy hill?"

Congregation:

Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, who speak truthfully from the heart

Laurie Sedgwick:

There is no guile upon their tongues. They do no evil to their friends. They do not heap contempt upon their neighbors.

Congregation:

In their sight the wicked is rejected, but they honor those who fear God.

Laurie Sedgwick:

"They have sworn to do no wrong, and do not take back their word."

Congregation:

They do not give their money in hope of gain nor do they take a bribe against the innocent.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Whoever does these things shall never be overthrown.

Choir:

(singing)

Julie Hartman:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Julie Hartman:

That was beautiful. "If we lose freedom in America, there is no place to escape to. This is the last stand on earth," President Ronald Reagan. Last spring break, I went on a trip with 100 other Harvard undergraduates to Israel. It was one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life, and I will always be grateful to Harvard for that. I recall the trip with awe and joy, but a certain moment rattled me. Our group attended a Shabbat dinner at a Tel Aviv synagogue. The Rabbi proclaimed, "Welcome to Israel. You are all here from America, the best country in the world." He paused. But not a single person in the audience clapped. The Israelis stared in disbelief. Americans are the freest, most privileged people on earth, yet many of us are ashamed to show any, even the tiniest trace, of national pride. Why?

Because we Americans of recent generations have been swaddled in prosperity and security, and in consequence have become ungrateful for the blessings we enjoy. It requires vigorous athletic imagination for most of us to consider the basic brutal realities that much of the world experiences daily. Even worse, we have consumed a cultural diet that reduces America to its ugliest moments, and dismisses all of its noble ideas and accomplishments as jingoism. This nation saved the world from global catastrophe three times in the 20th century. This nation has grown to treat racial, ethnic, and religious minorities with a quality and respect compared to other places and times on earth.

This is the nation where people are not constrained by their gender, religion, or class, but can work to achieve a better life. In this nation, we can criticize our government, secure in the knowledge that we will rise the next morning and our country will still respect our rights. We view these things to be our birthright, our permanent and guaranteed condition, but they are not. They exist only because past generations sacrificed to secure and maintain them. To our discredit, we have used these blessings not to strengthen this country, but to tear it down.

We members of this university, and we Americans, have shirked our responsibility as the most privileged cohort on earth. We have remained cringingly silent in the face of corrosive ideas, woke culture that corrupted our institutions, and severed the bonds that hold our country together. The New York Times won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting that the sole purpose of the American Revolution was to preserve slavery, and we remained silent. The Oregon Department of Education asserts that showing your work and finding the right answer in math is white supremacist, and we remained silent.

The American Medical Association has stated that the United States should remove gender from birth certificates, and we've remained silent. Howard Zen, the author of the most widely read history text in American public schools said that America has, "Done more bad than good," and we remained silent. A huge percentage of the donations to the National Black Lives Matter Organization have been spent on compensation and benefits, including several extravagant real estate purchases, and questionable consulting contracts, and we remained silent. On this campus we often

hear how impressive America is. Just outside of this church there was a sign for Israeli Apartheid Week, with an upside down faded American flag with painted bullet holes in it, and we remained silent.

We must not lie to ourselves or to one another by denying that a large reason that we remain silent is because we see personal and professional advantages in doing so. We are ashamed to be American. The shame should be on us. The people who excoriate religion live in a society where their freedoms are based on teachings in the Bible. Many who say that the nuclear family is antiquated, grew up in two parent households. Those who condemn the police as oppressive still summon them when they are in danger. Too many use their right to free speech to advocate suspending it for all who disagree with them. What a litany of dishonesty.

We are using our privilege to undermine the very system that has given us our privilege. America, despite it's failings, is the last great stand on earth. We must speak up against this now, or I fear that our civilization will face a somber reckoning. As President Reagan said, "If not us, who? If not now, when?" Thank you.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Please stand as you are able, and let us pray.

Laurie Sedgwick:

God of light and love, help us this day to worship you with all of our hearts, minds, and bodies. Shower us with the grace of your spirit, that we might joyfully receive the message you have for us today. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Let us together recite 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 us our trespasses as we forgive those trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. Forever and ever." Amen. Let us sing the hymn Lord of All Hopefulness, Lord of All Joy, number 81 in your crimson Harvard Hymnal.

Congregation/Choir:

(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.

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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 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.

Audience:

Amen.