

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Welcome to morning prayers. All who are able. Please rise for our responsive reading, found in your Psalter, Psalm 149. Praise the Lord, sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful. Let-

Congregation:

Let Israel be glad in its Maker. Let the children of Zion rejoice in their King.

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Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre.

Congregation:

The Lord takes pleasure in his people. He adorns the humble with victory.

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Let the faithful exult in glory. Let them sing for joy on their couches.

Congregation:

Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands.

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To execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples.

Congregation:

To bind their kings with fetters and their nobles with chains of iron.

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To execute on them the judgment decreed. This is the glory for all of his faithful ones. Praise the Lord. You may be seated. (singing) A reading from Mark 4. "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship so that it was now full. And he was in the lower part of the ship asleep on the pillow. And they awaken him. Said unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose and spoke to the wind and said unto the sea. Said unto the storm, peace be still. And the wind ceased. And there was a great calm." (singing)

I do not like storms. The only time that I like rain is when I'm sleeping and I could hear it hitting on the window panel. Maybe that's because of the trauma that's associated with my Southern proclivities. My grandmother would say, "Turn everything off, Calvin." In North Carolina. "Turn everything off. God is

working." Maybe that's why I do not like storms. But when I turned my heart to God, I thought that storms would cease to exist. Have you been there? It was like the more I tried to break free, the harder the storm. Preaching did not protect me from church people who wanted to smear your name. Ushering did not undo the pain that your children took you through. Singing in the choir did not stop the chaos of your marriage. And sometimes attending morning prayers did not stop some of the issues from your colleagues.

I know you don't want to say it. The more you prayed it appeared that the more painful that relationship became. The more you cried out for God, it appeared that the waves continued to beat upon your life. And I think over the last two years, we all can say that we have been through a storm by the name of COVID 19. Words cannot depict or explain some of the pain that we have encountered during COVID 19. It is never easy to go through a storm. However, the good news for those who believe is that God is present.

The disciples, friends can relate to this. This morning, they were going through a storm. They did not expect that it even appeared that God was nowhere to be found. Master, do you care that we are going through a storm? And sometime it appears that our theology is antithetical to the God we claim we serve. God, you say that you are good. We believe that you are God who is present. How can you allow us to go through these storms? It's okay to question. And I'm sure students here at Harvard, you will have many questions as we are on the cusp of a new year. And I beckon unto you to keep asking those questions, keep asking God, where are you during these storms? However, the good news that I want to leave with you today is no matter how many questions you have, no matter how many storms you faced, you being here means that you survived.

You being here means that there is yet more for you after their labels, after the boxes that they tried to place you in, you are still here. After all of their restrictions you are still here. When you think about the things that should have taken you out, you are still here to testify that no matter how great the storms have been in my life, I'm still here. After the backstabbing, the divorce, death after death, loss after loss, job change after job change. After your identity crisis, you are still here, beautiful with every shade. Beautiful with everything that flows through you, you are still here.

You may have gone through the storm and the rain, but you made it. You may have had hearts and pain, but oh, you made it. Please stand, if you are able. Let us pray. Holy and most merciful God, as we navigate the storms of life. As we stand on the cusp of a new season and year here at Harvard University, remind us that you are present with us. For we will face troubled waters, but as we face them, remind us that we can make it through the storm. Remind us that no matter how difficult the task, no matter what we may be facing, now, we will make it. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Together, let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples 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 trespassed 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.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Let us sing hymn 203, Immortal, invisible, God only wise. Found in your Harvard hymnbook. (Singing)

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

As you leave this place, but never away from the presence of God, may you be reminded of the love of Christ. And as you navigate the waves, the wind and storms of your life, may you have the courage to make it.