

Cheyenne Boon:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Cheyenne Boon:

And welcome to morning prayers. All who are able, please stand for our responsive reading. Psalm 40, which can be found in your black psalter.

Cheyenne Boon:

I waited patiently for you, oh God. You stooped to me and heard my cry.

Congregation:

You lifted me up from the desolate pit. Out of the mire and clay, you set my feet on a high cliff and made my footing sure.

Cheyenne Boon:

You put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

Congregation:

Then they shall see and stand in awe and put their trust in you.

Cheyenne Boon:

In sacrifice and offering, you take no pleasure. You have given me ears to hear you.

Congregation:

Burnt-offering and sin-offering you have not required, and so I said, "Behold, I come."

Cheyenne Boon:

In the roll of the book it is written concerning me: "I love to do your will, O my God; your law is deep in my heart."

Congregation:

Our great righteousness in the great congregation behold I did not conceal [inaudible 00:03:42].

Cheyenne Boon:

Your righteousness have I not hidden in my heart. I have spoken of your faithfulness and your deliverance. I have not concealed your love and faithfulness from the great congregation.

Congregation:

You are the Holy One; do not withhold your compassion from me; let your love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever.

Cheyenne Boon:

You may be seated.

Choir:

(Singing)

Sara Whiting:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Sara Whiting:

And thank you for inviting me today. I last appeared here on September 30th, 2019, and I wanted to reference part of that visit, not out of laziness and not with the assumption that any of you were in attendance, but because my own revisiting of that morning gave me pause.

I opened morning prayers that day with a short reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes, a passage that's familiar to anyone who knows that passage, that book of the Old Testament, and also to anyone who's listened to a lot of Pete Seeger songs.

It opens with, "To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven, a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted." Pete Seeger added "turn, turn, turn" as a refrain. He said, "To everything, turn, turn, turn. There is a season, turn, turn, turn." Thereby underscoring the message of continuity. Seeger also changed the ending of the passage to say, "A time for peace, I swear it's not too late," instantly transforming the biblical reference into a protest song.

I won't recite all eight lines here this morning, but I keep them close to me as the message of it is that things, all things, happen in due time and are themselves timely when they happen even if in the moment that may not seem to be the case, including a time to break down, a time to lose, a time to weep and even a time to hate.

Some may hear these lines as fatalist. If everything has its time, then what agency might I have? But I don't think the message is one of let it go or anything goes. Instead, it's a message that speaks to discontinuity and continuity and it also underscores the need for perspective and patience.

Just six months after I spoke here last time, things seem to stop or time itself seemed to stop. The COVID-19 pandemic did very strange things with time. On the one hand, we all saved time by not having to go anywhere. We also collapsed time by all meeting digitally, no matter from what part of the world. But all of that ultimately distorted time and consequently distorted perspective.

Sara Whiting:

While the world seemingly had time spare, no one seemed to take their time. Tempers were short and patience was thin. Social and racial injustices that we thought had been addressed 50 years ago replayed on the streets. And climate change, which was previously thought to be measured in ethics, became immediate. In short, over these past two and a half years, time became utterly warped.

This month, we at Harvard and others across the country returned to school and, we hoped, to a time of normalcy. As a dean, I really hope that's true. So to everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven. I don't think that I can argue that there was any purpose to the pandemic actually, but I do think that we can draw from this period. It's our role to pay attention and to give time its due. I would like to think that we can turn, turn, turn this moment and we can take patience from this pause.

The warping of time that happened during the pandemic was simply an intense concentration of a warping that's been happening over the past 37 years or so when we first entered the era of 24/7 news coverage. Digital networks and long-haul flying capacities have created a smaller, faster, but also a nonstop world.

So this morning I encourage you to pause. These 15 minutes here in Appleton Chapel, or five minutes here or there later in the day should be taken to put time into perspective. That means extending the moment to understand its context before making assumptions or jumping to conclusions.

I'll finish by turning to St. Augustine, who articulated this call for pause and patience so beautifully when he wrote, "Perhaps it might be said rightly that there are three times: a time present of things past, a time present of things present and a time present of things future. The time present of things past is memory, the time present of things present is direct experience, and the time present of things future is expectation."

May we all take the time, now that we are all back together in time, to reflect on what constitutes our memories, our direct experience, and our expectations.

Sara Whiting:

Thank you.

Cheyenne Boon:

Please rise in body or spirit for the prayer. Let us pray. Eternal God, in whom we move and breathe and have our being, accept, oh Lord, our thanks and praise for all that you have done for us. We thank you for the splendor of the whole creation, for the beauty of this world, for the wonder of life, and for the mystery of love. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

And together let us 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 who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

Let us sing the hymn, Now We Thank All Our God. Number five, in your crimson Harvard handbook.

Congregation/Choir:

(Singing).

Cheyenne Boon:

The great peace of Christ our Savior, and the Father's boundless love with the Holy Spirit's favor rest upon you from above. Thus, may we abide in union with each other and the Lord and possess in sweet communion joys which earth cannot afford. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.