

Harriet Lindman:

(Music).

Harriet Lindman:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Harriet Lindman:

Welcome to Morning Prayers at Appleton Chapel. If you are able, please stand for our responsive reading. Psalm 42, found in your Black Psalter.

Harriet Lindman:

As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, oh God.

Congregation:

When soul thirst for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God.

Harriet Lindman:

My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me continually, "Where is your God?"

Congregation:

These things I remember as I pour out my soul and advanced with the throng.

Harriet Lindman:

And led them in perception to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

Congregation:

Why are you cast down, oh my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?

Harriet Lindman:

Hope in God. For I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

Congregation:

Deep calls to deep at the thunder of thy cataracts. All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me.

Harriet Lindman:

As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me continually, "Where is your God?"

Congregation:

Why are you cast down, oh my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God. For I shall yet praise him, my health and my God.

Harriet Lindman:

You may be seated.

Choir:

(Singing).

Sue Fisher Wentworth:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Sue Fisher Wentworth:

Our text this morning is from C.S. Lewis. "The real problem comes where people do not usually look for it. It comes the very moment you wake up each morning. All your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists simply in shoving them all back, in listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in, and so on all day, standing back from all your natural fussings and frettings, coming in out of the wind."

Lewis is calling our attention here to our attention. His vivid language reminds us this isn't an abstract or vague question. He takes a moment we don't usually even register and shines the light on an astonishing scene. The wild animals of our thoughts tackling us, the noise, the mayhem. Lewis sees our hopes and wishes in this tumult, and he sees our fussings and frettings, our anxieties and fears, the ones that have real teeth. His point is, whatever the emotional tenor, our job is unceremoniously to shove all of these wild animals off the stage and open to a quieter, larger, mysterious dimension.

Again, his images are vividly particular, physical, engaging us as the embodied beings that we are. Imagine turning to listen to another voice, moving to look from another point of view. My favorite, "letting that other larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in," as if there is some deep underground river that is always already there, standing back from our fussings and frettings, coming in out of a powerful blistering wind and shutting the door behind us.

There is quietness here, the willing to trust in a larger field, which we do not and cannot know in our usual ways. Lewis repeats the word "other" three times in these few sentences. That other voice, that other point of view, that other life, not us, not ours, nothing we can grab hold of or take possession of, only be present to, and this, first thing in the morning, and so on all day.

Lewis speaks from within the Christian tradition. Every wisdom tradition engages in its own rich ways with this fundamental issue. Just to mention a few, indigenous wisdom, specifically in relation to the

natural world. Native American and botanist, Robin Wall Kimmerer, bears witness to her original relationship as a child with plants. They were not objects. They were companions and teachers, neighbors and friends. Judaism. Many of you know Martin Luther's distinction between I-Thou relations and I-It relations. Islam. The Sufi poet, Rumi, hears Allah say, "I have come to drag you out of yourself and take you in my heart."

We human creatures have lived with our extraordinary, complicated, and noisy minds for millennia. This is nothing new. The additional challenge we now face comes from our almost total immersion in a noisy exterior world of our own making and our simultaneous removal from the natural world, which is full of spacious silence. The sheer volume of this new noise shouts down silence and turbocharges the clammer already within. The gift of our attention has been made into a commodity, bought and sold to the marketplace.

I propose that we become uncooperative, that we find ways, personally and to be intentional about what we attend to and how we attend to the reality of the world. The quality of our intention actually shapes what we perceive. And what we perceive shapes how we will act in the world.

Doing this is simple. It is not at all easy. It is, as Lewis says, a real problem. But this spacious way is essential to the fullness of our community, to our life together, and to finding and taking our place in a vast, mysterious universe.

In closing, as our prayer, I invite you to listen for a moment into the silence, rung in by the singing bowl.

Harriet Lindman:

And now, please rise if you are able.

Harriet Lindman:

And let us recite the prayer Jesus taught us.

Unison:

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 and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Harriet Lindman:

Let us sing the hymn, Morning Glory Starlit Sky. Number 345.

Congregation/Choir:

(Singing)

Harriet Lindman:

And now, may the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Congregation:

(Music)