

Courtney Godwin:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Courtney Godwin:

And welcome to morning prayers. Our speaker this morning is Rand Wentworth. Please stand for our sponsored reading, Psalm 62, found in your black psalter. For God alone, my soul waits in silence. From him comes my salvation.

Congregation:

He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress. I shall not be greatly moved.

Courtney Godwin:

For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.

Congregation:

He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress. I shall not be shaken.

Courtney Godwin:

On God rests my deliverance and my honor. My mighty rock, my refuge is God.

Congregation:

Trust in him at all times, oh people. Pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us.

Courtney Godwin:

Men of low estate are but a breath. Men of high estate are a delusion. In the balances they go up. They are together lighter than a breath.

Congregation:

Put no confidence in extortion. Set no vain hopes on robbery. If riches increase, set not your heart on them.

Courtney Godwin:

Once God has spoken. Twice have I heard this: the power belongs to God.

Congregation:

And that to thee, oh Lord, belongs steadfast love. For thou must render to man according to his work.

Courtney Godwin:

You may be seated.

Choir:

(singing)

Rand Wentworth:

The text this morning is from Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, in which the monk, Zosima, says, "Love all God's creation, the whole of it, and every grain of God's light. Love the animals. Love the plants. Love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery of things." Rachel Carson loved all things. Born in 1907, she grew up on a small farm near the Allegheny River in Western Pennsylvania. Had no indoor plumbing. Her family was poor. She had dark brown hair, brown eyes and was painfully shy, introverted. So she spent her days wandering the fields and forests around the farm with her friends, the raccoons, the fox, pileated woodpecker, and [inaudible 00:08:46] hawks, ferns and grand oak trees.

When she graduated from college, she hoped to get a PhD, but had no money so went to work for the US Fish and Wildlife Service as a writer, part-time. She was a GS-3. If those of you who've ever worked in the federal government, that's about as low as you can go. She worked essentially at the... lived at the poverty line. And although she had no formal authority or degree, she gained national respect when *The Sea Around Us* won a National Book Award. Carson then began to research how DDT was causing vast destruction of bird populations. When word got out about her research, DuPont threatened legal action and claimed that she was a quote, "fanatic defender of a cult of nature," that she was a hysterical woman. The Secretary of Agriculture Benson told President Eisenhower that because Carson was quote, "reasonably attractive, but still unmarried," she was probably a communist.

The attacks backfired when press coverage increased public concern about toxic chemicals. For most of her life, Carson endured chronic illness, often confined to a wheelchair and enduring constant pain. When she was 50, she was diagnosed with cancer. And as the disease sapped her energy, she devoted her last months to testify before Congress, talking to the media and finishing her text for *Silent Spring*. When the book was published in 1962, it sparked congressional action and really birthed the environmental movement in America.

Now, 60 years later, we face another silent spring. Relentless climate disasters are destroying vast population of birds, but also animals and humans. Right now, a third of Pakistan is underwater. Last summer, drought, wildfire, triple digit temperatures plagued the Middle East, Africa, Asia Europe, the United States. There's not much left. The world is on fire. I teach environmental politics at the Kennedy School and think I'm working with some of the best of the next generation of environmental leaders. They come to me in despair, in tears, desperate for hope. But I do not have any easy answers. Progress has been painfully, painfully slow. We see some growth in solar and wind and electric vehicles, but there's little evidence that we have the political will internationally to turn this crisis around in time.

So many people expect leaders to be strong and charismatic and confident and analytical and rational. But I tell my students that they will need to look at this suffering, this vast suffering, and to grieve over the loss of what they love, to grieve so that they can hold the space in their own leadership to hold a crucible for others to grieve, and then find some kind of hope. Not a hope that's a sentimental escape from reality, but a steely-eyed acknowledgement of suffering and then a determination to take action.

Rebecca Solnit writes that your opponents would love you to believe it's hopeless, that you have no power, that there's no reason to act, that you can't win. But hope is a gift you do not have to give and surrender. To hope is to bet on the future.

In the fifth century, Saint Augusta wrote that hope has two beautiful daughters. One is named Anger, and the other is named Courage. Anger at the ways things are, and courage to change them. The civil rights leader and visitor to this pulpit, Harvard Professor Cornell Brooks, says that hope cannot be empirically proven. It is a moral choice. We can choose hope to act, to fight. We do not yet know exactly how we will reverse climate change, but we can start. You can start. Demand that the companies that you do business with get to net zero. Vote for public officials who will fight for climate change. Learn to live simply, buy less, fly less, pray more.

If Rachel Carson were with us today, she would call on us to stand up to power, persevere through suffering, to have courage in the face of attacks, to grieve, but not despair. Rachel Carson believed that ordinary people can change the world. And that alone, I believe, is reason for hope. Please join me in prayer.

Oh, holy presence, beat us in the darkness of this troubled world, and guide us to the light. Give us the wisdom and will to mend our ways, inspire us to restore the glory of your creation. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Courtney Godwin:

All who are able, please rise for the Lord's Prayer. Together, let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught us, saying:

All:

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

Courtney Godwin:

Let us sing the hymn For the Beauty of the Earth, hymn number four, found in your crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation/Choir:

(singing)

Courtney Godwin:

May the strength of God sustain us. May the power of God preserve us. May the hands of God protect us. May the way of God direct us, and may the love of God go with us this day and always. Amen.

This transcript was exported on Sep 13, 2022 - view latest version [here](#).

Congregation:

Amen.