

Harriet Lindeman:

Good morning, and welcome to morning prayers. Our speaker this morning is Alden Fossett. All who are able, please stand for our responsive reading, Psalm 71. "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust. Let me never be put to confusion."

Congregation:

"Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape. Incline thine ear unto me, and save me."

Harriet Lindeman:

"Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort. Thou hast given commandment to save me, for thou art my rock and my fortress."

Congregation:

"Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man."

Harriet Lindeman:

"For thou art my hope, O Lord God. Thou art my trust from my youth."

Congregation:

"I am as a wonder unto many, but thou art my strong refuge."

Harriet Lindeman:

"Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honor all the day."

Congregation:

"Cast me not off in the time of old age. Forsake me not when my strength faileth."

Harriet Lindeman:

"My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee, and my soul, which thou hast redeemed."

Congregation:

"My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long, for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt."

Harriet Lindeman:

You may be seated.

Choir:

(singing)

Alden Fossett:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Alden Fossett:

My text for today consists of several lines from a sonnet called 1643 "Veritas" 1878 by Oliver Wendell Holmes. "Truth: So the frontlet's older legend ran, on the brief record's opening page displayed, not yet those clear-eyed scholars were afraid. Nurse of the future, daughter of the past, that stern phylactery best becomes thee now. Lift to the morning star thy marble brow. Cast thy brave truth on every warring blast. Stretch thy white hand to that forbidden bough, and let thine earliest symbol be thy last."

I speak to you this morning in my capacity as the Harvard Chaplain's Chair for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging. We have created a tour that engages with the legacy and landscape of slavery at Harvard, and I'd like to begin with the word truth, veritas. Here in Appleton Chapel on these great white walls, you can see the omnipresence of the Harvard arms and veritas in our community.

The earliest drawing of the shield from 1643 differs from what we recognize as Harvard's logo today. The basic design, a red shield emblazoned with three books and the word veritas, has always been the same; but in its original form, the third book, which reads TAS, is not open. Instead, it lays facing down. Why? The Harvard Gazette suggests that it is a, quote, "reminder of a wilderness college that thought of itself as a new world vanguard in Christ's Puritan army. The open books represent the old and new testaments, the truth that any could read in the Bible. But the third book represented the yet unwritten truth of the future as the Puritan saw it; the book of truth that would be written by a second coming of Christ," end quote.

Whatever the case, in 1650, the Harvard corporation changed the motto to In Christi Gloriam, "For the Glory of Christ". It was not until 1836 that Veritas returned as the motto, but in 1848, it was abandoned again for Christo et Ecclesiae, "For Christ and the Church". Today, Harvard is more diverse than its founders ever intended. It includes people who are not men, people who are not white, and people who are not Christian. Yet, this institution would not have been built without the church. References to Christ and the church in early mottoes are a significant reminder of that fact. And today, Christian members of Harvard's community, like me, carry a particular burden, for it was in the name of Christ that indigenous people were murdered and African people were kidnapped and enslaved.

Holmes was a Harvard graduate and professor of medicine, and his poem played a significant role in the adoption of Veritas as the final motto. But in it, truth is described by whiteness. Harvard is personified as a nurse and daughter with a "marble brow" and a "white hand". Her clear-eyed scholars were enslaves and colonizers, who believe that violent racism was not just acceptable, but ordained by God. The truth that they sought was, in the words of St. Paul, "seen in a mirror, dimly." I pray that we will change.

Harvard's ties to the institution of slavery are as tangible as the beautifully carved wood here in Appleton Chapel. Samuel Appleton, whose posthumous gift in 1858 built this chapel, made his vast fortune in cotton mills in Waltham and Lowell. These mills depended upon the slavery practiced on Southern plantations for their immense profits. At his death in 1853, Appleton's estate was worth almost a million dollars, which is about \$38,500,000 today.

Next week, the Harvard chaplains will lead members of the community on tours of campus that engage with the geography and landscape of slavery at this institution. We will try to listen for the voices that cannot speak. We will bear witness to the historical trauma, suffering, and death rooted in the brutality of colonial New England. And to do this, we must recognize the blood and the bones beneath our feet. They are essential to understanding Harvard's history as the story of the institution's motto.

Please join me in prayer. "All that you touch, you change. All that you change, changes you. The only lasting truth is change. God is change." Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Harriet Lindeman:

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. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen." Let us now sing the hymn, Heaven and Earth and Sea and Air, number 45, found in your Crimson Harvard Hymnal.

Congregation/Choir:

(singing)

Harriet Lindeman:

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.

Congregation:

Amen.