

Courtney Godwin:

Good morning.

Speaker 2:

Good morning.

Courtney Godwin:

Welcome to Morning Prayers. Our speaker this morning is Maya Pace. Please stand for our responsive reading, Psalm 142, found in your black psalter.

Courtney Godwin:

"I cried my voice to the Lord. With my voice, I make supplication to the Lord.

Congregation:

O pour out my complaint before him, I tell my trouble before him.

Courtney Godwin:

"When my spirit is faint, thou'll knowest my way. In the path where I walk, they have hidden a trap for me."

Congregation:

I look to the right and watch, but there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me, no man cares for me.

Courtney Godwin:

"I cry to thee, oh Lord. I say thou art my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."

Congregation:

Give heed to my cry; for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors; for they are too strong for me.

Courtney Godwin:

"Bring me out of prison that I might give thanks to thy name."

Congregation:

The righteous will surround me; for thou wilt deal bountifully with me.

Courtney Godwin:

You may be seated.

Choir:

(Singing)

Maya Pace:

Good morning. This is a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke.

"Quiet friend who has come so far. Feel how you're breathing makes more space around you. Let this darkness be a bell tower, and you the bell. As you ring, what batters you becomes your strength. Move back and forth into the change. What's it like, such intensity of pain? If the drink is bitter, turn yourself to wine. In this uncontainable night, be the mystery at the crossroads of your senses, the meaning discovered there. And if the world has ceased to hear you, say to the silent earth, I flow. To the rushing water speak, I am.

There is something about this poem that gets me every time. I turn to it often. It has become a sacred text to me. In part, because I think a lot about despair, and Rilke gets right to the heart of despair. And I know it's only 8:37 in the morning. So, stay with me. But I also turn to the words of this poem because they feel like a deep salve and they're calling forth. So today, one week after the fall equinox that marks the shifts to longer nights, I invite us to turn to this poem again. As fall arrives and winter approaches, we enter a season of humus, of rich darkness, of fallow time, of solitude. Perhaps the gathering darkness feels welcome to you, mirrors some need you have for slowness for internality. Perhaps the months with more night feel reflective of a broader melancholy and grief in our world today.

Drought in Massachusetts, flooding and fire in other parts of the world, people in the streets protesting. Perhaps you approach the winter with a little bit of apprehension. I am an introverted Californian who likes to think about despair. So for me, it's a little bit of all of this. Stay with me. As we arrive at the turning of the seasons, and we face a time of deep complexity and ache, perhaps we can turn to this poem for inspiration and sustenance. Despair and darkness can feel desperately alienating, can cause us to go into overwhelm, our bodies and souls to shut down. We might go far away or go to sleep or turn on ourselves or those we love. Rilke offers us another option. Let this darkness be a bell tower. He says, "And you, the bell. Move back and forth into the change. Let yourself ring and be rung.

Do not hold yourself from wailing, loud and loud," says Rilke. Stay with me. As the darkness gathers, you might ask yourself, "What if we let ourselves breathe with the ache? What if we did not talk ourselves out of it or repress it? What if, instead, we let ourselves cry out, and we heard this cry as song, as divine call to action?" Stay with me. And yet, if we ended there, we'd only have a bell ringing out alone trying to make song out of grief. Grief and isolation is not the end of this poem's story. The bell is not ringing out alone. Someone, Rilke, is there listening to the bell, tasting the wine. He accompanies. He lets his own heart break. He breathes alongside. No, at the end of this poem's story is witness. The end of the poem's story is call and response. As we enter winter, Rilke poem asks us to reach in, bring out, and hold each other's hands.

And so, for you who sees and honors despair, or who is in some moment of personal difficulty, or who is feeling nervous about the fleeting fall and approaching winter, I offer this blessing. Dear ones, beloveds, we are here. We are here and alive. Our hearts are beating and breaking and beating again. May we feel our heart like a bell in our chest. Maybe let ourselves wail. Maybe we hear our own voice as that of God. May we listen for the songs of others and hear God's answer. May we gather close, ringing ourselves

silly into a cacophony of divine blessing. Moving with the ache. Staying with each other. May we, may we sing ourselves home.

Courtney Godwin:

Please rise as we recite the prayer that Jesus taught us.

Courtney Godwin:

Saying Our Father,

Congregation:

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.

Courtney Godwin:

Let us sing the hymn "Seek Not Far for Beauty," number 343 found in your crimson covered hymnal.

Congregation/Choir:

(Singing)

Courtney Godwin:

Friends, as we leave this place, when the darkness is a bell tower, let us be the bells. God, hear our song as we are the bells. And as we enter the darkness of the winter, stay with us. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.