

Cheyenne Boon:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Cheyenne Boon:

Welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the Black Appleton psaltar book, psalm number 13 found on page seven. Please rise in body or spirit to read responsively by whole verse.

Cheyenne Boon:

How long, oh, Lord will you ignore me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

Congregation:

How long will I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand?

Cheyenne Boon:

Look at me. Answer me, oh Lord, my God. Restore the luster to my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death.

Congregation:

Lest my enemy say, "I have overcome him," my foes exult when I totter.

Cheyenne Boon:

But I trust in your faithfulness. My heart will exult in your deliverance.

Congregation:

I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.

Choir:

(singing)

Judy Beals:

Good morning everyone.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Judy Beals:

Welcome. My first reading this morning is from Rainer Maria Rilke. I'll also be reading a bit from Mary Oliver. Rilke's Book of Hours: Love Poems to God, the Book of Pilgrimage Number 12.

"And yet, though we strain against the darkening grip of daily necessity, I sense this mystery. All life is being lived. Who is living it, then? Is it the things themselves? Is it something waiting inside them like an unplayed melody on a flute? Is it the wind blowing over the waters? Is it the branches that signal to each other? Is it the flowers interweaving their fragrances or the streets as they wind through time? Is it the animals warmly moving or the birds that suddenly rise up? Who lives it, then? God, are you the one who is living life?"

It's officially the busy season. The chill and the rush of fall is here. Winter approaches as war drags on in Europe while fuel pipelines and power plants lay idle. Another election of great consequence looms, requiring faith and engagement in the battered conditions of our fragile democracy. COVID has seemingly moved into our lives as a permanent occupier. Black lives, Asian lives, immigrant lives, queer lives still don't matter as they should. And yet we arrive each morning, or in my case, whenever I can get up, into this beautiful sanctuary. Our schedules are packed with all that needs to get done today. The reading, the writing, the teaching, the laundry, the paid work, the dishes, administrative commitments, the constant demands on our time. The to-do list is endless. This is what Rilke calls the darkening grip of daily necessity.

And still we come here in hope to begin the day. So too everywhere. In Ukraine, bombs continue to fall. Mass graves continue to be uncovered, and musicians still take to the streets. In border states, families are turned away or dumped without their knowledge in distant places. And still they dream. And still there are those within our communities who surround them in welcome and support. Harvard acknowledges the possession of human remains of 19 people of African descent, enslaved people, and the end of 22,000 individuals, most of whom are Native American. If we truly let ourselves absorb this, still we grieve, attempting however we can to honor and [inaudible 00:10:28]. At unexpected moments, grief knocks us off our feet, flattens us to the ground. And still, our hearts keep beating. The world burns and floods, and still, babies arrive into the arms of their mothers, and hope is reborn again and again.

Whatever else happens in this day, in this moment, morning light pours in like honey into Memorial Church and the choir fills our hearts with heavenly sound. This light, this music, our very presence here are to remind us of the precious and fleeting beauty of our lives, of the unparalleled gift of this very day. If only we look, each of us, each of you, everywhere something remarkable is happening. Is that you, God? Is that you? This too, this story of life, the story of God's presence in our lives, is the story. It may not be the only story, but it's a story that must be noticed and must be lifted up.

In this space of exquisite light and choral music for at least 15 minutes we remember that. We feel its power and its grace. Is that you, God? I think so. "I have refused to live locked in an ordering house of reasons and proofs," says Mary Oliver. "The world I live in, believe in is wider than that. And anyway, what's wrong with maybe? You wouldn't believe what once or twice I have seen. I will just tell you this. Only if there are angels in your head, will you ever possibly see one."

Please join me in prayer. Holy One, this day is given. May we honor you in all the ways we work, engage, notice and hold the vision of the world you intend. May we, in the words of the prophet Micah, respond to your call to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with you, our God. May we see the presence, the mystery of your presence everywhere in those we encounter on the streets, in the

classroom, in laughter, in pain, in all our profound confusion and longing, until as darkness again descends and this day closes, we rest our bodies in gratitude for all that's been given. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

If you would please rise in body or spirit and join in reciting the prayer that Jesus taught us, saying:

Congregation:

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 forever and ever. Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

Please join in singing hymn number 322, All Who Love and Serve Your City, found in your Crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation/Choir:

(singing)

Cheyenne Boon:

As we go into this day, let us bless and keep one another. Let us make peace. Let us be at peace. May it be so. And may the church say amen.

Congregation:

Amen.