

Elizabeth Propst:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Elizabeth Propst:

Welcome to Morning Prayers. Our speaker this morning is Teresa Cohn. Please join me in reading our responsive reading and rise as you do so, which is Psalm 90 on page 45 of your black Appleton Psalter.

Lord, you have been our refuge from one generation to another.

Congregation:

Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the earth were born, from age to age you are God.

Elizabeth Propst:

You turn those back to the dust and say, "Go back, O child of earth."

Congregation:

For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.

Elizabeth Propst:

You sweep us away like a dream; we fade away suddenly like the grass.

Congregation:

In the morning it is green and flourishes; in the evening it is dried up and withered.

Elizabeth Propst:

When you are angry, all our days are gone; we bring our years to an end like a sigh.

Congregation:

The span of our life is seventy years, perhaps in strength even eighty; yet the sum of them is but labor and sorrow, for they pass away quickly and we are gone.

Elizabeth Propst:

Who regards the power of your wrath? Who rightly fears your indignation?

Congregation:

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

Choir:

(singing)

Teresa Cohn:

Good morning. My name is Teresa Cavazos Cohn, I'm a climate fellow at the Harvard Divinity School. I'm a geographer in the Department of Natural Resources and the environment at the University of New Hampshire. And I'll just say, I think some of you can relate to this. I forgot my glasses and so, I'm doing fine here, but forgive me if I struggle a little bit or need a little distance.

This morning, I would like to share words from Margaret Pearce, a cartographer and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation who says, "We must learn to say with a map what we feel to be falling through the cracks between words yet, which we know must be said."

I thought of these words as I sat with a group of students outside Divinity Hall three weeks ago, watching Hurricane Ian, as seen by a satellite, spin across my screen over the thin drawn line of Florida. Lightning shot out from the hurricane's eyes in almost constant illumination. "It's so beautiful.", one student said, "So terrible."

This map, created by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA, helped us locate ourselves there looking down on our earth, beautiful and terrible as it seemed. I use similar words to describe the fire that evacuated me from my home as it took trees in the night. And my mother, in August, described how she could not tell the difference between the thunder shaking the house and the tree that hit it, until she walked downstairs and saw branches coming through the living room ceiling. She called it remarkable and awful, water dripping down the walls. My friend whose childhood landmarks were erased by the Yellowstone River floods said, "My through line has been rearranged."

I'm thinking of Margaret Pearce about mass, because I want to know how we orient in such times, when our economy's health weather reaches levels we call extreme. Where is home? What is home? Where are we now? That NOAA map, the one of Hurricane Ian, uses the Mercator projection to steer us towards that question. Gerardus Mercator in 1569 developed this map for sailors to more easily navigate along a fixed grid. People in places like the Boston Public Schools are now pulling that map off walls for its visual inflation of colonial powers and Margaret Pearce's words again, become relevant. "Our responsibility," she writes, "is to learn what must be kept and what let go for one mad moment in time." I ask then, "What are the maps at this time that help us navigate more ethical ways?" I ask my students, "What is North? What is our North now?" One answered, "The divide as the space between everything." Another food, another ethical connections, family, movement.

I have a red man, a Northern Arapaho friend of mine says, "The four hills of life." Like Pearce, I believe maps are tools for orientation. Creative tools that allow us to reach beyond ourselves, stretch our eyes and our hearts. They don't just tell us what we know, they help us begin to see what we don't. And if there is a time for creativity, not to abide by the grid lines of our Outlook calendars, and outdated maps, surely that time is now.

Like many professors, I write a lot of research grants, many on climate change, work with graduate students, teach classes. I'm also a mother, so I make peanut butter sandwiches, which I consider the repeat of projection of lunchtime, in my opinion. At a familiar state to many, I have no time, but I'm deeply asking in our extreme weather era, what must be kept and what let go for one mad moment in time? What my colleagues don't know about me is that I'm also a weaver with a 14 foot rug loom in my basement, as happens when you become a professor and rather, that loom has been in storage since I last used it eight years ago in Montana. I recently set the big loom up again, and was astonished to find the old warp intact. But astounded to find two words I'd written on the warp beam years ago with my fingers in dust, relationships and hands.

A poet friend of mine, Joan Stone, said this over dinner. "At the end of your life, what's left are your relationships and the things you made with your hands." I'd come home. I traced her abbreviated words

in dust so I could consider them over the loom's million revolutions. Joan died in eight years between here and there, and roughly in the same timeframe, 160 species were declared extinct. The Capricorn rabbit rat, Santa Cruz pupfish. I can't help but think of Lorine Niedecker's little poem I never meant to memorize. "I had a little granite pale. The handle of it was blue. To think what's got in the way in my life was enough to carry me through." It seems such a sad poem, but to me so hopeful, the realization of the loss, the great climate change epiphany.

In our busyness, sometimes the most sacred disappears in the urgencies of the day. I've realized recently, my North, my real North, is the loom in my basement. And lately I've been, oddly enough, pouring through triggering data and trying to translate the living world of fire onto a flat plane of wool. My North is my loom space, my chapel space, and what I intend to map there is a tapestry of fire, not the distant view of satellite eye, but a deep story of fire. My mother's fires, my grandmother's life. Physical. Emotional. I want to feel the world's climate beyond me in my hands. How I will leave it? I don't know.

Margaret Pearce says of her own cartography, "I can feel my way forward to a map whose appearance I cannot yet know." My own blind faith is that I can do something with my relationships in my hands, even as simple as making the terrible beautiful under our feet. This, to me, is our metaphor for climate action. Margaret Pearce says, "I trust the process to show the way."

Will you pray with me? God of the oppressed, let us learn to love your justice as much as we love your peace. God of the doubtful, let us love your mysteries as much as we love your clarity. God of the grieving, let us accept your sorrow as much as we accept your joy. God of the world, let us learn to love all parts of the creation as much as we love those who are near to us. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Elizabeth Propst:

Please rise and join us in the words that Christ gave saying...

Congregation:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, they 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.

Elizabeth Propst:

Please join in singing our hymn, Give us the wings of faith to rise, number 84 in the Crimson hymnal.

Congregation/Choir:
(singing)

Elizabeth Propst:

Christ has no voice in this world but your voice, and no hands in this world but your hands, and whatever mystery lies after this, for this lifetime, we have this world alone. Let us care for it, and let the work of justice and love be the work of our hands and our voices on this day and on all days. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen