

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 psalter book. Please rise in body or spirit to read psalm number 33, found on page 17.

Sing forth, oh you righteous, to the Lord. It is fit that the upright acclaim him.

All:

Praise the Lord with the lyre, with the 10-stringed harp. Sing to him.

Cheyenne Boon:

Sing him a new song. Play sweetly with shouts of joy.

All:

For the Word of the Lord is right. His every deed is faithful.

Cheyenne Boon:

He loves what is right and just. The earth is full of the Lord's faithful care.

All:

By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made. By the breath of his mouth all their host.

Cheyenne Boon:

He keeps up the ocean waters like a mound, stores the deep in vaults.

All:

Let all the earth hear the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world dread him.

Cheyenne Boon:

For he spoke and it was. He commanded and it endured.

All:

The Lord frustrates the plans of the nations, brings to naught the designs of the peoples.

Cheyenne Boon:

What the Lord plans endures forever, what he designs for ages on end.

Choir:
(singing)

William R. Fitzsimmons:

A reading from the book of Romans: "We have different gifts according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith. If it is serving, then serve. If it is teaching, then teach. If it is to encourage, then give encouragement. If it is giving, then give generously. If it is to lead, do it diligently."

At a Harvard gathering a number of years ago, someone asked me how I ended up at Harvard despite the fact my parents had not attended college. The truth, I said, is just the opposite. I ended up at Harvard not despite being first generation but because I was first generation. This week we get to celebrate the many ways. Being first gen prepares you, not only for Harvard, but for everything beyond. My family ran a combination gas store and convenience store 20 miles south of Boston. I grew up alongside them, spending many, many hours pumping gas, cleaning windshields, slicing meat, serving ice cream, doing all the things you need to keep a small business going. My parents were hard-working and inspiring. Really, in so many different ways, they inspired not only each member of our family, but also everyone of whom they came into contact.

Our customers were also inspiring. We made lifelong friends who were shipyard workers, deep sea divers, fishing and lobster boat crew. We also came to know long-distance truck drivers, railroaders, skilled machinists, laborers, police and fire personnel, healthcare workers, teachers and caregivers, and others who were referred to during COVID times as essential workers. What I learned from them was invaluable, wisdom about what they referred to as the real world, something that was in short supply at Harvard. Despite living nearby, I had never seen Harvard until senior year in high school. And when I first came here, it seemed to me and to other financial aid recipients like another planet. It was a Harvard that had few first-generation students, students of color, international students or women. That was almost exactly 60 years ago to the day. We have come a long way in recent decades in attracting more students to Harvard from first generation backgrounds as well as many others who have been traditionally underrepresented at Harvard.

These new Harvard students have brought critically important perspectives on what it means to be citizens and citizen leaders. They have also brought a remarkable array of talents with them, and they have enriched the lives of their fellow students and professors. They'll play a vital role ensuring that our nation continues to play a leadership role in the world. But this revolution did not happen by itself. Good people made it happen, and it has been an amazing team effort over time. Faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends, and great leadership, including our president, Larry Bacow, and Dean Claudine Gay, who is with us here this morning.

This week's celebration of what it means to be first generation at Harvard will send an important message to first-generation students. When all is said and done, the revolution that has occurred at Harvard over the past decade has not happened by itself. We are grateful to the present and previous generations who built the foundation for today's Harvard, and we call on future generations to enable us to reach new heights of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for students of all backgrounds. This has been a very difficult time for all of us during COVID, but first-generation students and other traditionally underrepresented students have been particularly challenged by COVID-19, by daunting economic uncertainties, and even by those who question their very presence in higher education. Let us pray that with our help, they will be able to overcome these challenges and join us here in the years ahead.

Cheyenne Boon:

Please rise in body or spirit and join me in prayer. God in the welcome that lets all feel at home. God in the courage that lets us let go. If and when we know we are loved, we can feel comfortable in our own skin, at peace in whatever turmoil arises and able to step out into the unknown. We will know that no matter what may occur, what is true will endure. God will be, love will win, and we will belong together. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

Now, 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. 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 188, I Sing the Mighty Power of God.

Congregation/Choir:

(singing)

Cheyenne Boon:

A quick announcement for anyone joining us for First Gen Visibility Week. The Next Gen Initiative will be hosting a social hour on the porch and in the memorial room after the service. So that's just out and to your left as you go. And thanks everybody for joining us today. And 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.