

Cheyenne Boon:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Cheyenne Boon:

Welcome to Morning Prayers. Our speaker this morning is Alejandra Salemi. She received her master's at Theological Studies from the Divinity School this year, and she's now a PhD student at Duke University, studying Population Health Science. So, we're really excited to welcome her this morning.

And now, I'll ask you to please rise, in body or spirit, and join me in a responsive reading from the Black Appleton Psalter book. Our Psalm today is number 44, found on page 22.

We have heard with our ears, O God, our ancestors have told us, what deeds you performed in their days, in the days of old.

Congregation:

You with your own hand drove out the nations, but them you planted; you afflicted the peoples, but them you set free.

Cheyenne Boon:

For not by their own sword did they win the land, nor did their own arm give them victory; but your right hand, and your arm, and the light of your countenance, for you delighted in them.

Congregation:

You are my King and my God; you command victories for Jacob.

Cheyenne Boon:

Through you we pushed down our foes; through your name, we tread down our assailants.

Congregation:

For not in my bow do I trust, nor can my sword save me.

Cheyenne Boon:

But you have saved us from our foes, and have put to confusion those who hate us.

Congregation:

In God we have boasted continually, and we will give thanks to your name forever.

Choir:

(Singing)

Alejandra Salemi:

A poem by Kyle Tran Myhre, Voting As a Fire Extinguisher.

When the haunted house catches fire, a moment of indecision. The house was, after all, built on bones, and blood, and bad intentions. Everyone who enters the house feels that overwhelming dread, the evil that perhaps only fire can purge. It is tempting to let it burn, just let it burn. And then I remember, there are children inside.

The morning after an election has always felt so heavy to me. And I say always, as if I've lived through generations and generations of elections. I mean, I will admit that I was a first time voter in 2016, which, I was a first time voter in 2016. But at the same time, I think the heaviness, and dare I say the dread, of elections is a part, or is in part, a product of entering the political field when I did, and in the body that I did, an immigrant, a Latina, and a woman.

It is also important to note that, I am a proud voter of the wonderful and yet heartbreaking state of Florida. Elections, I have noticed, are a little bit different here in the northeast, to some extent. There is a certain level of comfort, and maybe even certainty, that is afforded to many of the Northeastern states, these so-called blue states, that often lead the charge for progression, for progress, for being progressive, and for having inclusive politics. The south is not that way, though I'm sure I'm not telling you anything new.

Every election cycle so far, the reoccurring question in my head are always the same. Do I get to be regarded as a human being this time around? Will I be seen as more than just the uterus that I have, or the foreign country of my birth? Will I have protection and rights, and I, in my white skin, fare far better off than my neighbors, my siblings, and the rest of my community?

And as we awaited the much anticipated red wave with the blue, with the blood moon preceding it, I realized, that to some extent, it simply does not matter. I hold my breath every election cycle, hoping that a handful of candidates in my voting district will get elected, so that I can be off the hook for two more years. As if having an entire state of candidates elected would change the fact that George Floyd was murdered in Minnesota. A state that has voted for democratic presidential candidates since 1976. As if New York or Massachusetts are states of fully agreed upon and fully aware of racial and gender equity. Fully divested from prison industrial systems, and ensuring that all of our neighbors are not sleeping on the ground with the upcoming winter months. I mean, just walk around Harvard Square, right at the doorsteps of the greatest and the richest institution in this world, but we're Massachusetts, a blue state.

Last night, as I was reflecting on the election, endlessly refreshing the newsfeeds that were keeping up with the election results, I came to this somber realization, that the voting matters, and truly I believe that voting matters. It is simply the floor, and not the ceiling, to our responsibility as members of this collective community.

As I continue to envision a world as it ought to be, a world that is built through my faith, and through my reading of the scriptures, a world of love and social cohesion, a world of justice, a world where personhood is honored, a world that I feel proud to leave behind to my descendants. I know that the voting booth is just the first stop on this journey towards bringing it in. And so, the morning after the battle, we'll awake from our slumbers, perhaps rushing to check the final results that trickled in, because our anxious eyes just couldn't stay awake any longer last night. Perhaps you, like me, are wondering, what now? Where do we go from here? The morning after battle we tend our wounds, recognizing the members around us who are most harmed, and ensuring that resources and protections go their way.

Have you thought about the black woman in the rural south who doesn't have access to abortion? Have you thought about the immigrants who were shipped to Martha's Vineyard this morning? Who in our

community are the most vulnerable in the legislation that we have created to stop them or encompass them?

The morning after the battle, we take a breath, and recognize that these efforts are lifelong commitments, and that we must rest, in order to replenish and continue on. But most importantly, perhaps most importantly, the morning after the battle, we make plans. We draw peace treaties, and we recognize that we are fighting ourselves. We are fighting our siblings, our neighbors, our own future, and ultimately, our children.

So, when we are using voting as a fire extinguisher, it ought to stop the fire, halting the angle from flames that has destroyed everything around it. The fire extinguisher has served its purpose, but the ashes of the damage remain. The purpose of the extinguisher ceases, and we are left with nothing but a pile of rubble and ash. What comes up next is completely up to us.

The next election, after the firemen have packed up and gone home, all that remains are the pieces that are in front of us that we put back together. Repeating the actions of the past perhaps, but that we know will cause the house to catch fire again. And so I pray that the ashes of what has burnt down become the fertile soil of which we can grow new life on. A truer representation of this world. A truer representation of a country and a city, and even a school that showcases belonging and love. And as we engineer our way forward, maybe be better ancestors than we were descendants.

Will you pray with me? Almighty one, creator of this universe, creator of our bodies, creator of who we are. As we awaken this morning, perhaps thinking about the next thing that we do, perhaps thinking about the elections, perhaps not thinking about them at all. I ask that you light a fire within us. One that is perhaps controlled, but one that wages on, in the moments of doubt, in the moments where we feel defeated, in the moments where the winter months, the bitter cold to seep into our bones, I ask that you keep this fire, this warm light, lit in us. A guiding light. One controlled to not let it spread and cause harm, but instead, keeping us alive and warm.

Help us see what to do with these ashes, with the fertile soil underneath us, as we build a world as it ought to be. Guide us in our pursuit, today and always. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

Please rise, in body or spirit, and join in saying 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. 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 81, Lord of All Hopefulness, Lord of All Joy.

Congregation/Choir:

(singing)

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And now, 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.