

Elizabeth Propst:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Morning.

Elizabeth Propst:

Welcome to morning prayers, here in the Memorial Church. Our speaker this morning is Aric Flemming, who, some of our regulars might remember, has himself led this service very many number of times.

Please rise and join me in our responsive reading. Psalm 72 on page 36 of your black psalter.

Give the king thy justice, O God, and thy righteousness to the royal son.

Congregation:

May he judge thy people in righteousness, and thy poor with justice.

Elizabeth Propst:

Let the mountains bear prosperity for the hills in righteousness.

Congregation:

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give to the needy, and crush the oppressor.

Elizabeth Propst:

May he live while the sun endures and as long as the moon throughout all generations.

Congregation:

May he be like rain that falls on mown grass, like showers upon the earth.

Elizabeth Propst:

In his days, may righteousness flourish and peace abound 'til the moon be no more.

Congregation:

May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

Elizabeth Propst:

May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him.

Congregation:

For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor, and him who has no helper.

Choir:

(singing)

Aric Flemming:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Aric Flemming:

It is such a joy to be back in the Appleton Chapel at the Memorial Church of Harvard University. I spent many mornings here in this very spot in community with many of you over the last few years. I know the pandemic has caused much destruction. I'm happy to see that we are here, standing strong, and we're still in community.

My talk this morning is entitled Who Am I Silencing? Who Am I Silencing? And I pulled inspiration from a Roman text, from 10:14-15, which I'll read for you here. "But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed, and how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard, and how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him, and how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."

One of the tragedies of the human condition is that in the business of life, the hustle and bustle, the ebb and flow of community, the economic demands of labor machines in America, we forget that we are first human, with thoughts, with emotions, with experience. Being human simply means that you are on a journey of discovery. It does not mean that you can be perfected in every instance. It does not mean that you will satisfy every desire. But it does in fact mean that you have the chance to give a valiant effort in discovering what possibilities lie ahead of you, possibilities to imagine a new world perhaps? One without blemish and shame? One without controversy and opinion. One without the need to dismiss the inherent value of any person.

It seems that we need a reawakening to the truth about ourselves. We are first human. So, why is it that queer folks are still having to deal with the threat of mistreatment? I'll say it: Queer folks are divinely misunderstood. The reason for this misunderstanding is that queerness does not appear to the naked eye as status quo, but rather, queerness is a gifted lens from God to see the world beyond the veil.

Because when you've been marginalized, criticized, and ostracized from the norms of society, you develop survival tactics that allow you to identify with the struggles of other marginalized people. Therefore, queerness is a gift, not a curse. But when the world around you does not see you as a gift, they will silence you.

Now, think of all the prophetic voices of history to date, and imagine if they had let their voices be silenced. Now, imagine if God had given divine instruction for the earth's survival to someone you silenced. Silencing the voices of queer folks is actually silencing the voice of God.

And arrogant will be the destruction of the earth if we do not humble ourselves to hear the voice of God in everyone. So they said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" And yet, one of the best things ... And yet, one of the things they silenced was indeed one of the best things that ever happened to Nazareth.

We must give voice to those without a voice because God is in their voice. Do you know the irony of this message is that I became inspired to write on this topic after losing my voice? I started asking, "What am I going to do if I cannot talk?" You can ask yourself the same question. What towers would fall if your voice leaves your body at this very moment? What deals would you not be able to complete? What

conversations would you not be able to have? What occupations would you not be able to fulfill without your voice?

Place yourself in the shoes of those without a voice, and see how long of a journey you have to go. Because sometimes the very answer we've been looking for is right in front of us, but you will not hear it if you are not listening. How else will they be heard?

As humans, it is our job, our duty, our responsibility to remember that a deposit of spiritual enlightenment has been placed in every person, in all people. When God made us, God placed God's self, God's essence, God's being in us which means there is power and meaning in what we speak. There is power and meaning in what we say. There is power and meaning in what we do amongst ourselves and amongst each other, and the voice is not something that can be taken away from you because those who wish to take it did not give it to you.

They don't understand the mechanics of how to remove the voice because they don't understand the mechanics of how to give one. Your voice is not something anyone can give you because it's something God already gave you, but a listening ear cannot be demanded of anyone. Everyone has a choice to listen or not.

My hope for today and tomorrow is that we learn to listen twice as much as we speak, for if we do we might hear the voice of God. Will you pray with me?

O Lord, open our ears to hear your voice, to discover your wonders. Expose us to the glory of your majesty that we may walk humbly before you and humbly before each other in community, recognizing the inherent value in any and all people that we may come in contact with. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Aric Flemming:

And when Jesus was teaching His disciples to pray, they asked Him, "Master, how art we to pray?" And He said, "In this way." We'll say together the Lord's Prayer. 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. Amen.

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.

Elizabeth Propst:

Please rise and join in our closing hymn, There is a Balm in Gilead, number 306 in your crimson hymnal.

Choir:

(singing)

Congregation:

(singing)

Elizabeth Propst:

Christ has no hands in this world but your hands, and no voice in this world but your voice, so let our hands and our voices do the work of justice and love on this day and on all days. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.