

Harriet Lindeman:

(music).

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Harriet Lindeman:

And welcome to Morning Prayers, here at Appleton Chapel. Our speaker this morning will be Beth Hardin, Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative Fellow. Welcome. Please rise, in body, or in spirit, for a reading of Psalm 8, found in your Black Psalter.

Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name throughout the earth? You who have covered the heavens with your splendor.

Congregation:

From the mouths of infants and sucklings you have ordained strength on account of your fellows, to put an end to your enemy and avenger.

Harriet Lindeman:

When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you've set in place...

Congregation:

What is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you take notice of him?

Harriet Lindeman:

That you have made him a little less than divine and adorned him with your glory and majesty.

Congregation:

You have made him master over your handiwork, laying the world at his feet.

Harriet Lindeman:

Sheep and oxen, all of them, the wild beasts, too.

Congregation:

The birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, whatever travels across the seas.

Harriet Lindeman:

Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name throughout the earth.

You may be seated.

Choir:

(Singing)

Beth Hardin:

From tribal elder and retired Episcopal bishop, Stephen Charleston, my ancestors were an apocalypse people, survivors of the end of the world as they knew it. They walked through the sorrow and the struggle, transcending and transforming the shadows around them.

What have they taught us? One thing more than any other. As long as we live in the light of the Spirit, no darkness will overcome us. The truth of this ancient promise is not made with words, but in the lives of those who experienced it. We survived because we believed.

In seven days, I will leave Harvard for the third time. With practice, I've learned that there are three things that I need for the journey ahead. A call, a well, and a tribe.

Samuel Clemens once said, "The two most important days of your life are the day when you are born and the day when you figure out why." In these hallowed halls, we have been extolled to find our purpose, in part to preserve sanity in a frenzied world, and more hopefully, to enable ourselves and others to survive the end of the world as we know it.

In Hebrew Scriptures, Moses hears the call of the Holy One in the burning bush, an unquenchable light in an unexpected place. The call to lead his people out of bondage so encompassing that generations accepted its normalcy, is an unwanted disruption of an established life. Imposter syndrome, before it was named, Moses resisted until the power of the Great I Am prevailed.

In Wyoming, where water is so precious that the law assigns the rights to water on, through, and below the land that cradles in, I learned to cherish precious drops. Water is life. There, water's power reveals history in rock and transforms lifeless arid soul to fervent. To sustain our human bodies, drink water. To understand weather, study the oceans. To heal the climate, harness water.

John's Gospel, written in the period 90 to 100 of the Common Era, records the story of the Samaritan woman who meets Jesus at Jacob's well, fetching water in the heat of the day. Their bold exchange crosses the cultural norms of the era, shattering the expectations of gender and the bitterness of religious division. She is called out of the shadows, from scorned, to one remembered in sacred history. She survived because she believed in living water.

Born in North Carolina, and forever returning to its soul, I am nourished by the strength of the nine tribes whose land it is, from the land of the Catawbas, the Waccamaws, and the Lumbee, I have glimpsed the importance of a tribe, tested wisdom of ancestors that shaped the culture, rootedness to long-contested land, never relinquished, dance and music that infuse the body, vision so distant that it encompasses seven generations. For most of us, the tribe we experience will be the one we sustain. Generations of family, chosen and inherited, for whom we commit more than Harvard's currency of time, 15 minutes on Zoom, or the rare 30 minutes in person. Our tribe includes the ones who visit us in prison, literal or figurative, the ones who give us their last morsel, the ones who wrap us in the warmth of their souls.

In one week I will again depart this place, seeking a call, but confident of a well and a tribe. And I will listen to the stars. Sure that one in the east will guide me, and us, to transform the world.

Will you pray with me?

Creator God, give us eyes to see, and ears to hear your call to the world's wicked problems. Fill us at the well of living water that we may serve the world as we know it, as it ends, and make love incarnate in us. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Beth Hardin:

And will you join us in 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. 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.

Harriet Lindeman:

And now, please rise, in body or in spirit, and let us sing the hymn, The Lord will Come and Not Be Slow, Number 98.

Congregation/Choir:

(Singing).

Harriet Lindeman:

And now, the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Go in peace. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

(Music)