

Harriet Lindeman:

Good morning.

Congregation:

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Harriet Lindeman:

And welcome to Morning Prayers here at Appleton Chapel. My name is Harriet Lindeman, and I am a master of divinity student at Harvard Divinity School, and a seminarian here at Memorial Church. I will be speaking this morning.

Please rise, in body or in spirit, for a reading of Psalm 8, found in your Black Psalter.

O 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 founded strength on account of Your foes, to put an end to enemy and avenger.

Harriet Lindeman:

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

Congregation:

... what is man that You have been mindful of him, mortal man that You have taken note of him,

Harriet Lindeman:

... that You have made him little less than divine, and adorned him with 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, and wild beasts, too;

Congregation:

... the birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, whatever travels the paths of the seas.

Harriet Lindeman:

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name throughout the earth!

(singing)

525,600 minutes. 525,000 moments so dear. 525,600 minutes. You can say it with me if you want. How do you measure, measure a dear? In daylights, and sunsets, and midnights, and cups of coffee, in inches and miles, in laughter and strife, in 525,600 minutes. How do you measure a year in the life?

Now, if you have been a theater kid in the last couple of decades, or spent time in the vicinity of one, you might recognize these words as lyrics from the song, Seasons of Love, from the rock opera, Rent, by Jonathan Larson. And I'll be transparent in my choice here.

Yesterday would've been my friend Judith's 31st birthday, and I couldn't resist bringing these words. In part, because I think Judith would've gotten a kick out of seeing me up here in my ministerial robes, reciting Rent lyrics, words that we loved to sing together. And the longer I sat with these words in my mind, as it goes with beloved and sacred texts, the more I found they had to offer me in this moment.

Daylights, sunsets, midnights, cups of coffee. The rhythm is catchy and upbeat. The lyrics are hopeful, but I'm hearing something else in this song today too. Do you ever feel this relentlessness in life? At times, it feels like a miracle to me, like the motion of the divine herself, that no matter what, the sun rises and sets, even if we can't see it, it's there, another day comes. And at other times it feels harsh, infuriating, wrong. We just keep spinning through space, even when a world has ended. I have felt this as I have taken in the devastation in Syria and in Turkey, let my heart shatter for a moment, gone to a vigil, and returned to my homework, because assignments are still due.

As I have read about people, families, drowning off the shore of Italy as they attempted to migrate, felt nausea and tears rise, and proceeded to chop onions for dinner, because my housemates and I still need to eat. As I continually turn towards the daily horrors and away again, grasping for meaningful response, carried on by the rhythms and task that turn my day and my gaze inward. Sometimes I feel like the harm humans do to one another, and to the other beings on this earth, and to the earth herself, is the result, not of any ill intention, but simply being stuck in this relentless motion. The sense that no matter what comes, we keep to the patterns we know. And from a failure, especially by those in positions of power, to pause and step back to reevaluate, reimagine, repair daylights, sunsets, midnights, cups of coffee, endless cycles.

In the season of Lent in the church, other speakers have brought in this idea of repentance, and here's what comes up for me. I know much more about musical theater than I do about Greek, but the wonderful Krista Tippett has taught me that the biblical Greek root of repentance is, in her words, very active and visual. It's about stopping in your tracks and walking in another direction. Stopping in our tracks. Just that first part is a welcome invitation to me in the season, to pause in our habitual ways of being and moving through the world, to look around at where we are and how we got here. To ask ourselves whether we want to continue on the course, rather than be pulled along by inertia. And I see this need to pause institutionally, societally, collectively. And I believe there's transformative power in the little things in our own lives too.

I think of my friend Judith, who died this August, and her willingness to slow down and disrupt expected ways of being, disrupting our generation's instinctual irony and distance with her direct open earnestness. Somehow creating this balance of deep coolness and profound dorkiness with her tattoos repping summer camps and our Harry Potter reading group. Disrupting the socially easeful conversations that were surface level, by speaking about the grief and the loss she carried. Disrupting a day's plan to be present with a friend who needed company. And these disruptions inviting us into fuller, messier humanity, as in so many ways, her memory is a blessing.

How do you measure, measure a year, and daylights, and sunsets, and midnights, and cups of coffee? The world will, God willing, keep spinning. And I will try to look for the miracle in that. And within the motion, I will look for the space to stop too, to disrupt the momentum of deeply rooted rhythms. Only from that place of pause may I, and we, plant and nurture the seeds of a new course. Oh and spoiler, the song suggests we measure our lives in love, usually the right answer, I think. So will you pray with me?

Oh, loving God, be with us on this day that you have made, as rain falls and we know the world is getting ready to bloom again. Help us to discern which rhythms are life giving, and where we might pause and disrupt. May this and every season be filled with love. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Harriet Lindeman:

Please rise in body and spirit for the Lord's Prayer. Now. We pray as Jesus taught us.

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, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Harriet Lindeman:

Let us sing the hymn 41, Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies.

(singing)

And now, may the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make her face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up her countenance upon you, and give you peace. Go in peace. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.