

Courtney Godwin:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

Courtney Godwin:

Welcome to Morning Prayers in Appleton Chapel. Will you please rise as you are able and join in reading our responsive Psalm Number 33 in your black Psalter. "Sing forth, O you righteous, to the Lord. It is fit that the upright acclaim Him.

Audience:

"Praise the Lord with the lyre. With the ten-stringed harp sing to Him."

Courtney Godwin:

"Sing Him a new song. Play sweetly with shouts of joy."

Audience:

"For the word of the Lord is right. His every deed is faithful."

Courtney Godwin:

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

Audience:

But by the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, by the breath of His mouth, all their host."

Courtney Godwin:

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

Audience:

"Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world dread Him."

Courtney Godwin:

"For He spoke, and it was. He commanded, and it endured."

Audience:

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

Choir:

(Singing)

Courtney Godwin:

"What the Lord plans endures forever, what He designs, for ages on end." You may be seated.

Our text this morning comes from Swedish poet, Bodil Malmsten. "Nothing must happen to you. No. What am I saying? Everything must happen to you, and it must be wonderful." Most days, I feel like life just does not slow down. There's always so much going on. I'm reminded of this when I read the news in the morning. I'm reminded of this when I pass one of the overcrowded bulletin boards anywhere on this campus. And I'm reminded every day when I check my beloved planner for the umpteenth time. I fight to find the balance between planning for the future and just getting through the day, one day at a time.

About a year and a half ago, I began a spiritual practice at the encouragement of Kerry Maloney, the chaplain at HDS. I started to observe a weekly Sabbath. At about six on Friday evenings, I turn off my phone, my laptop goes into a drawer, and I commit to not turning on the TV or anything with a screen. If I'm at home, I'll light a candle. But no matter where I am, I check the next day's weather first and I text my mom. And then, for 24 hours, not a single notification distracts me from the moment, no texts, no emails, no phone calls.

When I talk about this ritual, there are three questions that I'm asked most regularly. The first is, "You're a Christian, though. Why do you do the Sabbath on Fridays?" Well, I work in a church. I love being here, but I work on Sundays. The second is, "What do you do if there's an emergency?" One thing that I've learned in the last year is that not many emergencies care if I'm aware of them for a few hours or not. But the most common question I receive, and usually from people about my age or younger, is some sort of variation on, "But what do you do?" Well, I clean the kitchen without any music in the background. I wake up without an alarm. I only talk to people that I share a physical space with. I read, I nap, I knit.

In some ways, I do absolutely nothing. For 24 hours each week, nothing happens to me. In those same 24 hours, I do everything. Everything happens. I notice the way the sun feels on my face from the sky, from the wind. I fully taste my tea and deeply inhale its steam. I fully feel my laughter in my throat and stomach when I hear a joke. I notice the changing of the leaves or the sounds of children playing as I walk through my neighborhood.

When it's time to end my Sabbath practice, I like to take a warm shower, eat a piece of chocolate, and relight the candle. I notice the sweetness of the chocolate, the sweetness of the lavender eucalyptus scent, and the dusty rose-colored jar, the way the light of candle glints on my hair and my fingernails. Both of my feet are planted firmly in the present moment.

Tricia Hersey, known online as The Nap Bishop, articulates in her manifesto, Rest is Resistance, that "Exhaustion is wrecking our lives and killing the planet itself. Rest is healing not only for us as individuals and for us as a collective community, but acts as a restorative for the earth as well. If we feel the urgency that climate change, natural disasters, mass shootings, wars, and elections demand every moment of us, every day, we will burn out. With to-do lists that endlessly grow, rest must be intentional or it will be relegated to the bottom of the list, rarely reached. Rest is as central to breath in taking care of ourselves, and through taking care of ourselves, taking care of our communities and our world."

The rest that I prioritize in my Sabbath practice follows me far beyond that one day a week. The weeks that I cut my Sabbath short or skip it completely, I feel the difference in myself. When I honor the Sabbath, my attention span increases throughout the week because I know where to focus, on this present moment. I become a better version of myself because of this practice. I started the Sabbath practice so that nothing would happen to me, but I found out instead that everything happens, and it is wonderful.

Will you pray with me? God, you created the world in six days and on the seventh, in all of your wisdom, you rested and called it holy. Remind us to rest and embrace the holiness of being. As we go into this

new academic year, no matter how many projects there are, check boxes on the to-do lists, or breaking into pieces, help us remind ourselves and each other that it can wait. Our rest is fully too. Amen.

Audience:

Amen. Amen.

Courtney Godwin:

Will you please rise in body or spirit for Lord's Prayer.

Audience:

Our Father.

Courtney Godwin and Audience:

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.

Courtney Godwin:

Please join in our communal hymn, number 81, Lord of All Hopefulness, Lord of All Joy.

As we begin this new school year, as we begin this new day, let nothing happen to us. No, what am I saying? Let everything happen to us, and let it be wonderful. Amen.

Audience:

Amen.