

Elizabeth Propst:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

Elizabeth Propst:

Welcome to Morning Prayers here in the Appleton Chapel. And good morning, I hope, to those of us joining on livestream for the first time, I hope. Please rise in body or spirit and join in our responsive psalm, which is number 146 in your black salter.

Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul.

Audience:

While I live, will I praise the Lord. I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

Elizabeth Propst:

Put not your trust in princes, nor in the Son of man, in whom there is no help.

Audience:

His breath goeth forth, he returneth to His earth. In that very day his thoughts perish.

Elizabeth Propst:

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord, his God.

Audience:

Which made heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that therein is, which keepeth truth forever.

Elizabeth Propst:

Which executes its judgment for the oppressed, which giveth food to the hungry. The Lord loosed the prisoners.

Audience:

The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind. The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down. That the Lord loveth the righteous.

Elizabeth Propst:

The Lord preserveth the strangers. He relieveth the fatherless and widow. But the way of the wicked He turneth upside down.

Audience:

The Lord shall reign forever, even thy God, Okay. Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the Lord.

Elizabeth Propst:

Good morning.

Audience:

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Elizabeth Propst:

On this beautiful Inaugural Friday, we're going to turn our attention to the Gospel of Mark chapter two, and talk a little bit about how obstacles can turn into opportunities for our wholeness and our neighbor's wholeness. In this passage, we are witnessing quite the commotion. Great crowds are surrounding Jesus as He is ministering in His hometown. Four people approach the scene carrying a paralytic man, attempting to have an encounter with Jesus. There are too many people and they need a plan B.

Friends, great obstacles require a great disruption. Our four friends have an idea. They begin to climb upon the roof with the paralyzed man in tow, and they began to tear it up. Nothing is going to keep their friend from an audience with Jesus. And their plan B worked. And they lowered this man to the feet of our Lord, and as a result, this man was made whole not just physically, but also spiritually.

So a few observations today about these recipients of grace. The burden of one became the burden of many. Saints, our wholeness is not an individual act. It is a communal endeavor. There will be times where we will need to be carried by others to get to the feet of our salvation. And there will be times when we are called upon to carry others and creatively remove obstacles for our neighbor to receive that same touch of grace.

Galatians 6:2 says this, "Carry one another's burdens. In this way, you fulfill the law of Christ." Bear one another's burdens, as the apostle Paul writes. My friend Jess so wisely once told me that it doesn't mean we are called to carry offenses, but rather we are called to shoulder life with those around us. We are not built to engage this life alone. Movement towards wholeness is a communal act and responsibility, and at times requires some dismantling and subverting the norms around us.

One observation about Jesus in this narrative, the first thing He sees is their faith, the faith of the community. He doesn't comment about the disruption. He doesn't comment about the hole above Him. He doesn't even comment about this man's physical condition. He sees the faith and relentlessness of this group, and this man is seen both physically and spiritually. Jesus looks at him and says, "Son, your sins are forgiven." And He later tells him, "Take up your mat and go home."

Scripture says immediately his body responds to the words of Christ, and he picks up his mat and he does just as he has asked. May our hearts not become hard or numb to the things of God. May we not underestimate the power of showing up for others or allowing others to show up for us. May we continue to move towards the feet of Jesus, our Savior, where absolution is found and healing for our physical brokenness is made available. May the Holy Spirit give us imagination to take down barriers that keep our neighbors from wholeness.

Friends, we are the plan and Jesus is our answer. So as we go out this day, be encouraged with these three takeaways. First, show up for those who cannot show up for themselves. Number two, remove obstacles. And finally, doing these things is an act of faith. May God's grace and peace be with you.

Will you join me in prayer? Lord, on a day of celebration and transition, we give thanks for the infinite number of ways that you break into our lives through the presence of others, for the ways you have given us to hold each other in our actions, in our words, in our silence, in our solidarity. May we continue to hold each other in both joy and in sorrow, and to know that the work of holding each other is built on the foundation of your love, which holds us all. Amen.

Audience:

Amen.

Elizabeth Propst:

Please rise in body or spirit for the Lord's Prayer.

Elizabeth Propst and Audience:

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 trespassed 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.

Please join in our closing hymn number 358, Fair Harvard.

Elizabeth Propst:

Christ has no hands in this world but yours, no voice but yours. May our hands and our voices do the work of justice and of love today and all days. Amen.

Audience:

Amen.