

Harriet Lindeman:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Harriet Lindeman:

And welcome to Morning Prayers here at Appleton Chapel. Our speaker this morning will be Dr. Suzanne Blier, Allen Whitehill Clowes Chair of Fine Arts, and Professor of African and African-American Studies. Welcome.

Please rise in body or in spirit for responsive 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, the wild beasts and 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)

Suzanne Blier:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Suzanne Blier:

I believe that buildings have souls. That they endure and retain and support over time all of the events, all of the people of the emotions that transpired within them. We think about buildings as foundations, and floors, and walls, and roofs, and all of that is true, but they also retain everything that has happened within them. And this building is no different, and in many respects, it's even more. Nearly a month ago today, my daughter got married in this very chapel. And it was a stunning marriage, it, like all marriages. And the love that was expressed there was, like most marriages, absolutely extraordinary. And the sounds here, and the echoes of the organ, and everything that transpired was enormously powerful.

And it was not her first marriage. She had found, eventually, the love that would transform her life. And love is like that. It changes, it swells, it diminishes, it grows, it transforms over time; in the same way I think that the memories of all of our buildings do much the same way. So look for the ways in which love is really transformative over time, in a particular second, in multiple places.

The second thing I want to briefly bring up in relationship to bodies and souls is the idea of courage. On Friday, just outside this building, I got to participate in and witness the extraordinary inauguration of President Claudine Gay. It was one of the most memorable events I've ever been part of, and I've been teaching here for over 30 years. Someone contacted me afterwards and said it was like the tears of joy in the rain that was pelting down on everyone. And so, thinking about this building of buildings in our campus, and the world more generally, as a space that holds memories, several of the things that were most profoundly moving to me was having a member of the Massachusetts Tribal Council speak at the beginning, about how we sit on native land, and how everything in the native perception of space and place has to do with the sacredness of the land on which we sit. And I'm standing, and we honor it, not just for this moment in time, but also for the past and for the future.

The second thing that she said that just was so powerful and so full of courage was in honoring Juba and the other enslaved people who had been part of the Harvard community for such a long period of time. And how transformative that event was yesterday in acknowledging that part of our own history, our contribution to the slave trade, and the legacy of that that endures in the spaces of Harvard, in the city of Cambridge, and around the world. And how much courage it takes, not just to move forward, to think about a pathway in which we can try to engage in a much better life, but also, the courage it takes to acknowledge the real pain, the real hardship of what our past has been.

Finally, I want to speak to passion. I was working at the US Senate after my freshman year of college, and it was a very hard summer, and it happened to be the summer that Bobby Kennedy was killed. And I was not a Democrat at the time. I grew up in Vermont and everyone there was a Republican. But I remember the hearse traveled by. It was a summer of tear gas just flowing into the windows of where I was staying. And his hearse goes by in front of me, and it just floored me in the power of that moment. And I realized then, that I could not do what I might've wanted to do at that time, was to focus on the arts and art history, which is my field of love and passion. And went home. I met someone and he was joining the Peace Corps, and I decided I would quit school and go to Peace Corps with him in Africa. And Africa transformed my life.

It's a place I go to as much as I can. It's a place of deep spirituality and deep power. But to quit school after your freshman year to get married, at the really strange age, at the time, of 19. And we're still together. Love transforms and changes. And then for me, as a college dropout, to be at Harvard, to be here speaking today, it speaks to the power of passion, and finding whatever it is, and being open to

whatever avenues tend to take you in a particular place. And listening, in the end, to how important it is to take risks, to follow your heart, and to think about the ways in which in small and larger avenues, not only do buildings and places have souls, but love, and courage, and passion, provide some of the core ways in which we can think about transforming the world in which we live, and being open to have it transform us.

Harriet Lindeman:

Please rise, in body or in spirit, for prayer.

Oh, loving God, be with us on this day, and in this season of harvest, of decay, of lengthening nights. Help us to look with honesty at our past, and find the courage to mourn what must be mourned, release what must be released, and open ourselves to new beginnings. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Harriet Lindeman:

And now, we pray as Jesus taught, saying.

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, Put thou thy trust in God, number 296.

(singing)

And now as we leave this place, the peace of God be in your hearts, the love of God be in your hands, the joy of God be in your soul. Go in peace. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.