

Elizabeth Propst:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Elizabeth Propst:

Welcome to Morning Prayers here in the Appleton Chapel. A special welcome to the parents joining us. We are happy to confirm that your child has been here every morning without fail. Please rise, in body or spirit, for our responsorial psalm, which is number 136 in your black psalter. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever."

Congregation:

"O give thanks unto the God of gods, for His mercy endureth forever."

Elizabeth Propst:

"O give thanks to the Lord of lords, for His mercy endureth forever."

Congregation:

"To Him who alone doeth great wonders, for His mercy endureth forever."

Elizabeth Propst:

"To Him that by wisdom made the heavens, for His mercy endureth forever."

Congregation:

"To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters, for His mercy endureth forever."

Elizabeth Propst:

"To Him that made great lights, for His mercy endureth forever."

Congregation:

"The sun to rule by day, for His mercy endureth forever."

Elizabeth Propst:

"The moon and stars to rule by night, for His mercy endureth forever."

Congregation:

"And hath redeemed us from our enemies, for His mercy endureth forever."

Elizabeth Propst:

"Who giveth food to all flesh, for His mercy endureth forever."

Congregation:

"O give thanks unto the God of heaven, for His mercy endureth forever."

Choir:

(Singing).

Livy Zug:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Livy Zug:

Let us begin, in the manner of Friends, with a moment of shared silence.

Henry David Thoreau writes, in *Walden*, "the wild river valley and the woods were bathed in so pure and bright a light... There needs no stronger proof of immortality. All things must live in such a light." In April, one of our choral fellows, Judah, revealed how the divinity within guides us towards healing. I hope to echo and honor his words in my meditation on the Quaker concept of the inner light.

Now, as you may know, in place of a unified set of beliefs, we Quakers ultimately hold that there is that of God in everyone. Thus, we must love our neighbors, no exceptions. Some of you may know that Quakers were the ones who invented solitary confinement, or that we were some of the strongest advocates for abolition in the 19th century, or, perhaps most strangely, because of oats, for some reason. But as for me, Friends, what is most special about Quakerism is the understanding that divinity, and therefore both grace and agency, is inextricably bound up in our own transience. So, in this passage, Thoreau is not mansplaining, as he usually is, about how we would all be better off if we lived simply in the woods. Please remember that his mother did his laundry, which is, I must say, way better than paying \$1.50 a load for it at Harvard. But there is something strikingly Quaker about the image of immortal sunlight gently blessing the trees.

It reminds me of a summer morning two years ago when I was at a Quaker meeting outdoors. It was pouring rain, and more than once we slipped from silent contemplation to look at each other and hope for a consensual movement indoors. Before long, however, the rain eased, and it was suddenly blinding. The red-eyed vireo sang, and though I was still very wet, I was grateful for nothing more than the sunlight. If you are thinking about attending a Quaker meeting, please do know that most are not normally held in thunderstorms, just a disclaimer. But, in any case, I discovered nothing profound about myself while freezing in my wet shoes. What I did was reconsider just what the light means to me. On that morning, I had to wait a long time for the sun. When it came, it was like a blessing, but in retrospect, I think it was more of a reminder.

The inner light is very much like the outer light. We have all felt, at one point or another, simply not good enough. Harvard is very good at promulgating this, and it is easy for me to lose sight of the inner luminous divinity that seems to shape my ends. But just as we've all felt not good enough, Friends, I would venture to guess that we've also felt just good enough. I feel that way when I see the light lifting the leaves of the trees in the Yard at sunset, and I am awed, for awe is really just the hope that I might be worthy of that beauty. It is more than just gratifying to be warmed by the light. It is right. It is hopeful. It is a reminder, a reminder to laugh and love and lift. To try, if we can, to be bright.

Tolkien says that, in Middle Earth, when the angels made the world by singing the divine song, that not just the music, but "the echo of the music went out into the void, and it was not void." Friends, that

echo is the light in us. We may feel it warmly, if only we look, if we choose to listen for it. I think Thoreau is right. There remains no stronger proof of immortality than the light in the trees or the light in someone else's eyes. He does not want us to be perfect, but simply to be aware of our wholeness within nature's wholeness. The light about and within is divine, as much a part of us as we are of it. If it is a mystery, it is a lovely one, one that allows us to bask in the humanity of not clearly known. So let us lift ourselves into its brightness. "All things," indeed, "must live in such a light." So, let us return to where we began. [Latin 00:12:30]. Perhaps the soul is something more divine and is undaunted. Friends, will you pray with me?

Thank you.

Elizabeth Propst:

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

Congregation:

"... 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."

Elizabeth Propst:

Please join in our closing hymn, number 286 in your crimson hymnal.

Congregation:

(Singing).

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 always. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.