

Harriet Lindeman:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Harriet Lindeman:

And welcome to Morning Prayers here in Appleton Chapel. My name is Harriet Lindeman, and I will be speaking this morning. Please rise, in body or in spirit, and join me in a responsive reading of Psalm 145 in the black psalter. "I will exalt you, O holy God, and bless your name forever and ever."

Congregation:

"And every day will I bless you and praise your name forever and ever."

Harriet Lindeman:

"Great are you, O God, and greatly to be praised. There is no end to your greatness."

Congregation:

"One generation shall praise your works to another and shall declare your power."

Harriet Lindeman:

"I will ponder the glorious splendor of your majesty and all your marvelous works."

Congregation:

"You uphold all those who fall. You lift up those who are bowed down."

Harriet Lindeman:

"The eyes of all wait upon you, O God, and you give them their food in due season."

Congregation:

"You open wide your hand and satisfy the needs of every living creature."

Harriet Lindeman:

"You are righteous in all your ways and loving in all your works."

Congregation:

"You are near to those who call upon you, to all who call upon you faithfully."

Choir:

(Singing).

Harriet Lindeman:

What if, instead of speaking, we just had the choir sing that again? That was so beautiful. Thank you all. But I do have a reading from *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf. "What is the meaning of life? That was all. A simple question, one that tended to close in on one with years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead, there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was one. This, that, and the other; herself and Charles Tansley and the breaking wave; Mrs. Ramsay bringing them together, saying, "Life stands still here"; Mrs. Ramsay making of the moment something permanent. This was the nature of a revelation. In the midst of chaos, there was shape. This eternal passing and flowing was struck into stability. Life stands still here."

So I knew I wanted to bring these words today, but I kept having this feeling that maybe I should just read them and let them be. They're such a beautiful offering from Virginia Woolf, from her character, Lily Briscoe, and I'm not sure if I'll just muddle them by sharing some of my thoughts. But here we are, so why don't you muddle through with me for a moment? They're some of my favorite sentences, and I've loved them since I first read them about 10 years ago. I was in a cozy caravan in western Scotland on a misty evening. And as I read through them, I felt something in my mind and in my heart starting to shift. I've circled back to them frequently. I now have them hanging up in my home, where I can see them daily, although I don't always remember to pause and ground there. I love the building rhythm of the syllables, and the way, when I feel overwhelmed, or things feel too big or messy, they remind me to ground in the small.

This fall, I have felt some resistance to them. I'm in Stephanie Paulsell's class at the Divinity School about Virginia Woolf and religion. It's a class I've been wanting to take for years, before I even decided to apply here, so it's been a gift to read these texts with new people, new community. And as I got to this passage, I felt some unease. I was moved, as I always am, by the sheer beauty of the language. And I also had this worry of what does it mean for me, in my body, in my position, to find comfort in little daily miracles right now? This kind of thread of thought is familiar to me. Like, "Harriet, how dare you seek reassurance or distraction? You, within your place of relative power, of safety, a white American Christian, in this fancy university?"

And I do think I have something to learn from that voice. It can be a reminder to turn, as bravely as I can, towards the places it's hard to look; towards Gaza, and the West Bank, and Israel right now; towards those impacted by the latest shootings, and all of those communities still unhealed from the ones that have come before; towards those in our own community, struggling, as we often say here, to find housing, healthcare, healing, connection; and towards the suffering in all the places that transcends geography or race or power, loss, illness, loneliness.

And still, I do find myself responding to the little daily miracles around me. This Saturday, to the feeling of sunshine on my face, even in late October; to the magic of a song that moves me almost to tears this morning, thanks y'all; to finding a friend in a crowd at a rally and sharing a tight hug. These little moments when life stands still, and something takes shape in the midst of chaos. And I remind myself that these moments are not necessarily distractions from the hard things in the world, the pain and the urgency of it all.

May these words lifting up little daily miracles remind me that life is beautiful, is sacred, that each life is worth grieving and trying to fight for. Remind me, when it all feels so big, to ground in the specific in my body. To remind me to live in the dissonance of love and fear, of delight and heartbreak, rather than seeking resolution. Remind me just to keep going, to keep breathing, to keep opening myself up, rather than becoming numb. May the little daily miracles show us the divine and the tiny things that make up the world. May the little daily miracles nourish us, sustain us, as we keep meeting what comes. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Harriet Lindeman:

Please rise, in body or in spirit, as we pray. And now, let us pray as Jesus taught, saying, "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 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, for ever and ever. Amen."

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 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, for ever and ever. Amen."

Harriet Lindeman:

Let us sing the hymn, God is Love, Let Heaven Adore Him, number 14.

Congregation:

(Singing).

Harriet Lindeman:

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

Congregation:

Amen.