

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Good morning.

Crowd:

Good morning.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Welcome to morning prayers. We're so grateful that you're here, and we are also grateful for our speaker today, Rucha. Welcome.

All who are able, please rise for our responsive reading. Number 154 in your Psalter, which is Proverbs chapter three, Number 154.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that obtaineth understanding.

Crowd:

For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver and the gain thereof than fine gold.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

She is more precious than rubies and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

Crowd:

Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand are riches and honor.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace-

Crowd:

She is a tree of life to them as they hold upon her, and happy is everyone that holds her fast.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

The Lord, by wisdom, founded the earth; by understanding, He established the heavens.

Crowd:

By his knowledge the depths were broken up and the skies dropped down the dew.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

My son, let not them depart from thine eyes, keep sound wisdom and discretion.

Crowd:

So shall they be life unto thy soul and grace to thy neck.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Then shall thy walk in thy way securely and thou shall not dash thy foot.

Crowd:

Thou shall not be afraid, yea, thou shall lie down and thou sleep shall be sweet.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

You may be seated. (singing)

Rucha Modi:

Good morning. When I was a young child, I was often drawn to the most colorful wrappers in my neighbor's baskets during Halloween. And after getting too many vanilla Tootsie Rolls and Banana Runts that made my teeth hurt, and I missed out all the good stuff, I realized I should also consider what was inside the candy wrappers.

The following verse is in the [inaudible 00:07:53], my mother tongue. [Foreign Language 00:07:57]. We will break it down, but quickly that translates to, I want to worship God and what is it that I am doing? We should look inward, ask ourselves that question every day and every action.

[Foreign Language 00:08:24]. We should turn and look, not just at but within all of our actions. We should consider not only the wrapper, but what's inside. As devotees of the Divine, it is not enough to give our time, our resources, and our energy. When we peel back the candy wrapper, we have to ask ourselves, where are we operating from? Is it guilt for what we didn't do before the damage was done? Is it grief for the struggle and pain that may have been mitigated? Is it social approval because everyone around us is demanding action? Is it anger or hatred for the people and institutions, some of which we are also complicit in?

Yes, these very human instincts motivate individual action, that interest towards some relief in times like this, but surely not justice and surely not our collective liberation.

The thunder of the warplanes will not disappear even if we play the most beautiful song of solidarity at full volume. The warplanes must land.

[Foreign Language 00:09:44]. I want to worship God, and what is it that I'm doing? If worshiping God is committing to becoming more like his choices to [inaudible 00:09:56] or his Son, to be more loving, to be more non-discriminate, to be more generous, we have to ask ourselves, are we really doing that? Do I find gold in the emptiest and most weathered hands? Do I find honey in the most unpolished and sharp cutting words? Do I tend to my own wounds as I tend to others' wounds?

Liberation cannot be contingent on approximate enough relationship, allowed enough explosion, or piercing enough headline. I believe we must be unwaveringly committed to our collective liberation in this life and whatever comes next with every dollar, with every word, and with every prayer. It won't be perfect. Nothing is perfect but the Divine. But that doesn't mean we don't try. It doesn't mean we don't get up every morning and work our very hardest to walk in His footsteps. That is our Satna. That is our daily holy practice.

Enjoy a good where we should keep looking, self-reflection is not self punishment. It is not shame spiraling. It is focused, still, and generous like observing a bird outside the bedroom window. If we are harsh and unforgiving in our self-reflection, not only will we become apathetic, but we will also become harsh and unforgiving towards others. Apathy is a great poison to peace. It buries our siblings under gunfire and wildfire.

[Foreign language 00:11:41] If the world is one family, if we are all God's children, then apathy is a great betrayal to the Divine's call to worship.

I welcome y'all to stand for prayer if you're able.

We pray that we may soothe our own fatigue and apathy with gentle focused and continuous self-reflection. We pray that we find the courage to ask ourselves the daily question. I want to worship God. What is it that I'm doing? We pray that when we peel back the colorful wrapper of the social media post, the strongly worded phone call, the generous donation, and we see the ingredients of rapid response, of grief, guilt, and anger. We pray that we contend to the individual, communal, and institutional wounds that spread this violence in our shared home so that we may grow more selflessly, more relentlessly, and more lovingly alongside those who face violence across oceans, generations, and in this very yard. Amen.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Now, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples 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 who trespass against us. And lead us not to temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Now let us sing together. Hymn number 85. We sing for all the unsung saints found in your Harvard Crimson Hymnal.

(singing).

As we leave this place, but never away from God's presence. May we worship God through love, hospitality, and joy. Go in peace.

Crowd:

Amen.