

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Welcome to our service of morning prayers here in the Appleton Chapel of our Memorial Church. Our speaker this morning is Dean Tom Dunne, the dean of students at Harvard College. I invite you, please, to rise and join in our responsorial song, which is number 40 in your Black Psalter.

I waited patiently for you, O God. You stooped to me and heard my cry.

Congregation:

You lifted me out of the desolate pit, out of the mire and clay. You set my feet upon a high cliff and made my footing sure.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

You put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

Congregation:

Many shall see and stand in awe and put their trust in you.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

In sacrifice and offering, you take no pleasure. You have given me ears to hear you.

Congregation:

Burnt-offering and sin-offering you have not required, and so I said, "Behold, I come-"

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

"In the roll of the book, it is written concerning me: 'I love to do your will, O my God. Your law is deep in my heart.'"

Congregation:

I proclaimed righteousness in the great congregation. Behold, I did not restrain my lips; and that, O Lord, you know.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Your righteousness have I not hidden in my heart. I have spoken of your faithfulness and your deliverance. I have not concealed your love and faithfulness from the great congregation.

Congregation:

You are the holy one. Do not withhold your compassion from me. Let your love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever.

Choir:

(Singing).

Thomas Dunne:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Thomas Dunne:

A special good morning to the undergraduates who joined us here at 8:30 this morning. This week, Harvard joyously celebrates first-generation students. Perhaps you saw the banners with student profiles in the yard as you made your way here to morning prayer. This celebration is part of a larger national movement. Colleges and universities across the country are highlighting the countless contributions first-generation students make to their campus communities every day.

On November 8th, 1965, exactly 58 years ago today, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Higher Education Act at his alma mater, Southwest Texas College. At the ceremony, President Johnson noted, "For the individual, education is a path to achievement and fulfillment. For the nation, it is a path to a society that is not only free but civilized. For the world, it is a path to peace, for its education that places reason over force."

This landmark piece of legislation opened pathways for millions of people to pursue higher education. Yet, we have much further to travel to realize our full promise. Today, only 40% of Americans aged 25 and older hold a bachelor's degree. At Harvard, we've made progress in increasing opportunities for first-generation students to thrive on this campus. We acknowledge that this progress is a product of struggle. This very church is the embodiment of sacrifices made/individual dreams deferred to advance the greater interest of others.

The church bell that rang this morning is inscribed with the phrase, "In memory of voices that are hushed." It makes me think of the students who gave their lives and the service of our nation and the ways in which families have sometimes muted their own voices so their children would be given a platform like Harvard from which to speak.

As I stand before you as a first-generation college graduate, I reflect on the sacrifices that people in my own life, both known and unknown, have made for me. My father joined the army right after high school in New York City. His education was barracks and battlefields rather than lecture halls and libraries. My mother came from a time when women rarely attended college, even less so from Omaha, Nebraska. She's arriving tomorrow to celebrate her 90th birthday and see Harvard for the very first time.

One of the great honors in my role as dean of students is meeting families who, like my mom, have never visited Harvard before and hearing about the sacrifices they have made in order to bring their children to this place. During this year's move-in on a hot August day, I met a father who was holding the door to his daughter's dorm as she carried a bundle of clothes through her entryway and up the stairs. Over a bottle of water, he shared that he had just dropped off his other child at Yale. As we stood in the shade of Widener Library, he confided that he'd been worrying about this moment since the previous May, leaving his kids on the other side of the country.

As a long-haul truck driver, he'd often find himself alone in his thoughts, thinking about what this would all mean for his children and for his whole extended family. I imagine that most of us have similar stories

in our personal libraries, the people and paths that brought us to this very moment: the mother who takes a second job, the father who works overtime, the grandparent who pitches in with childcare, the student who works a term-time job.

Today, I will reflect on those who have made sacrifices for me. My office is within earshot of the sound of the bell. When it rings, I'll be reminded today and every day of the voices that have been hushed and the sacrifices that have been made that have allowed me to walk these grounds and be part of this place. Thank you.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

I invite you, please, to rise for our prayers. The Lord be with you.

Congregation:

And also with you.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us pray. O gracious God in you. We live and move and have our being. We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life, we may always remember that we are walking in your sight, in the sight of your lasting and abiding love. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Now, we pray the words Jesus taught us, 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 into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever 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 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.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Please join in our concluding hymn number 3:46.

Choir:

(Singing).

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

I have good news and bad news this morning. The bad news is there is no mem cafe. The good news is that we have a special reception downstairs provided by Graduate Commons and the Harvard

Foundation in celebration of First Gen Week. That means the food is going to be better. There's going to be more of it, and more of it downstairs. Please join us for reception in the undercroft downstairs after the service and this evening at 5:15 for communion in this chapel.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thank you, Lord.