

Steph Grossano:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Steph Grossano:

And welcome to Morning Prayers at Appleton Chapel. Our speaker this morning is Mike Delaney. He is the Religion and Public Life Humanitarian Action fellow at Harvard Divinity School. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book. Please rise, in body or spirit, as we read Psalm 42 responsively by whole verse. "As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God."

Congregation:

"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?"

Steph Grossano:

"My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me continually, "Where is your God?"

Congregation:

"These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng."

Steph Grossano:

"And led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs at thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival."

Congregation:

"Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?"

Steph Grossano:

"Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, my help and my God."

Congregation:

"Deep calls to deep at the thunder of thy cataracts. All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me."

Steph Grossano:

"As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me continually, "Where is your God?"

Congregation:

"Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my help and my God."

Choir:

(Singing).

Mike Delaney:

"The story of the 20th century was finding out just how big and powerful we were. And it turns out that we're big and powerful as all get out. The story of the 21st century is going to be finding out if we can figure out ways to get smaller or not." That quote is from Bill McKibben. My name is Mike Delaney. I'm the humanitarian fellow at the Religion and Public Life Program at Harvard Divinity School. As someone who has been involved in humanitarian sector for my entire career, I'm increasingly concerned about the health of the world.

One indicator of the ill health is the total need in the sector, and that has grown exponentially. Taking all of the people in humanitarian need in the 1970s, it would be just about \$100 million. At the turn of the century, it was \$2 billion. In 2010, it was \$12 billion. In 2017, just five years ago, all of the humanitarian crises, put together by the UN, was \$22 billion. Today, it is \$56 billion. At the same time, there are 110 million people displaced by climate and more. A recent report commissioned by the UN this week revealed, in a 10-year span, previous 10-year span, 21 million people have been uprooted from their homes every year due to climate change. It concluded that 1 billion people will be displaced by the year 2050. It's just 27 years away. I used to think that the horrific part of climate change would not happen in my lifetime, but I now realize that was just wishful thinking. It's already happening to over a hundred million people, the most vulnerable and marginalized of our world.

This semester, in our religious literacy class, we assigned *The Nutmeg's Curse*, written by Amitav Ghosh. In *The Nutmeg's Curse*, Ghosh recounts the conquest of the Banda Islands in the South Pacific by the Dutch East India Company for the purpose of monopolizing nutmeg trade. The conquest included the massacre of the Bandanese people in 1621. Ghosh argues that the dynamics of climate change today are rooted in the centuries-old geopolitical order constructed by western colonialism. He connects the Banda massacres to monopolize the nutmeg trade with the thread through history that passes through the initiation of the slave trade from Africa, the extermination of Native Americans in the Americas, all the way through modern day Brazil, and the continuation of killing Indigenous people, directly and indirectly, through the burning and depleting of their lands and forests.

The book is a hard read, providing a human perspective that our problems are structural, global, and deeply rooted. He also highlights that the people who have been victim of this system, Africans taken as slaves, and the Indigenous people in Asia and the Americas, were actually most in touch with the spirits of this world, and the voices of non-humans. In other words, their spiritual life included listening to nature, and, in turn, living a respectful life with nature, the earth, and our planet. The irony is that the colonial model and pursuit of increasing wealth, and with it, disparity, has killed or marginalized the people and the beliefs of the people who care deeply for the earth, and actually could have the answers to the world's environmental problems.

About 30 years ago, I was on a mountaintop in the Andes, and I was in a large community gathering in one of the highest peaks in the region. You could see the people coming to this gathering from the different mountainsides, and the colorful outfits and beautiful hats. And as we came together, the meeting was started by the local shaman. He poured a glass, held it high, and then poured it in the earth. And the glass, the first glass, the first was an offering to Mother Earth, the first and the most important guest at the meeting. We then went around and each of us drank from that glass, and with the remaining drops, we gave it to Mother Earth.

In the book, Ghosh recounts a story of a Native American chief not signing a treaty, because Mother Earth was not consulted. Before walking away, he asked the question, "What does the earth say? I wonder if the ground has anything to say?" In the simple question of how we treat the earth, or how we treat Mother Earth, another question arises; are we listening? It is through listening that our hearts are opened. In this very polarized world, before our policies will change, there will need to be a change in our approaches, and even our faith practices. It is the empathy that makes it possible for humans to understand each other's stories. This is why I'm convinced the fundamental tool to a sustainable world of just peace is listening.

I don't have all the answers on what to do about the climate. However, in the spirit of gratitude, and to discern my path forward on what can be done, I commit to improving my listening and my openness by being present to nature at least once a day. I will learn more about the Native American wisdom and approaches to sustainability, and I'm committing myself to start more conversations about the environment.

Steph Grossano:

Please rise, in body or spirit, and let us pray. Creator of all, we are living in the ravages of the ways that we have thought that our superiority over peoples and over land was what you wanted. Loving God, help us to repent of these ways, and in doing so, help us to right-size ourselves. Help us to be big enough to meet these challenges. Help us to be small enough that we might listen to your creation, to peoples that we have not heard, to your call to repent. And together, let us pray as Jesus taught us. "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, 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 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, for ever and ever. Amen."

Steph Grossano:

And let us sing the hymn 201 in your crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation:

(Singing).

Steph Grossano:

As we go into this day, we remember that, in the goodness of God, we were born into this world. By the grace of God, we have been kept all the day long, even unto this very hour. And by the love of God, we are being made whole. Go in peace. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.