

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

(Music).

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Welcome to service of Morning Prayers, here in the Appleton Chapel of our Memorial Church. I invite you, please, to rise and join in saying our responsorial psalm, which is Number 142 in your psalter.

I cry with my voice to the Lord. With my voice I make supplication to the Lord.

Congregation:

I pour out my complaint before him. I tell my trouble before him.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

When my spirit is faint, Thou knowest my way. In the path where I walk, they have hidden a trap for me.

Congregation:

I look to the right and watch, but there is none who takes notice of me. No refuge for remains for me. No man cares for me.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

I cry to Thee, oh Lord. I say, "Thou art my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."

Congregation:

Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low. Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to Thy name.

Congregation:

The righteous will surround me, for Thou wilt deal bountifully for me.

(Singing).

Danping Long:

A poem from Murasaki Shikibu, Heian, Japan. "Meeting on the path, but I cannot know clearly if it was he. The midnight moon is hidden in a cloud." Here ends the reading.

To come clean, I'm a agnostic. I'm fully open to the existence of God. The only logical conclusion about him I have arrived at, so far, is that all I know is, I don't know. Like Murasaki, longing for him on the

street in the midnight hour, I look for God in Scripture and in my life, with all my fear and my strength. I'm sure that I can know fully that it was he.

I resonate profoundly with Murasaki's longing, her endless seeking, her indecisiveness, and her sorrow. Murasaki Shikibu authored The Tale of Genji, the crown jewel of classical Japanese literature. People today refer to it as the world's first novel. But unlike the growing reputation of her masterpiece, not much is known about Lady Murasaki, herself.

Her first name, Murasaki, belongs to the heroine of her novel, and Shikibu, her father's title in the royal court. Her real name is hidden, concealed, and forgotten. How can we possibly see Murasaki through the following years of oppression that has buried her true name? How can we recognize the glory of God in the fleeting moment of meeting on the path?

In a blessed morning, like today's, when an impalpable body of light illuminates every one of us, and sweet heavenly hymns fill our years, it feels easier than some of the other moments, to announce the Divine has been working among us. But when I enter the night of my life, alone, when all the stars have fallen fast asleep, only then do I realize how challenging it is to live up to the belief that God has been with us, not just that he's passing, but always.

I pray, in such moments, not for performing a specific miracle in public, instead, I pray for the courage to believe that our Beloved has not disappeared, but are only hidden from us, like the midnight moon hiding in the cloud. In the age of science and progression, it is a new ritual to scrutinize every belief as if mathematical propositions. We hope, if we follow one logical step after another with conviction, we can cut through the tangled vine in our life, and become convinced that we're right. A poetess that only confesses how little she knows seems to be too useless to fit into this progressive world.

"Meeting on the path, but I cannot fully know if it was he. The midnight moon is hidden in a cloud."

What I learned from Lady Murasaki is that Poetry has a logic of her own. We now note if the person Lady Murasaki write into truly is the person she was thinking of, insofar as we keep this question in our heart, we keeping our hope keyed up, a hope that whispers, "He's only hiding, but not gone." Somehow, in walking along with Murasaki, we're convinced that the "he" she's referring to is only hidden in the cloud, like the midnight moon.

When we walk away from our garden, this morning, onto the road, pray you remember, there is a sun and a moon in the flock of clouds. May we run into the windswept days with the same tenderness as we turn towards glorious sunsets. May we always to on the lookout for the repose of moonlight when life is clouded by much uncertainties. May the hope, sorrow, and courage to seek our hidden Beloved sustain us as it has sustained Lady Murasaki 1200 years ago, and he will meet again. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

I invite you, please, to rise for the prayers.

The Lord be with you.

Congregation:

And also with you.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to Thee, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly Thine, utterly dedicated unto Thee. And then, use us, we pray Thee, as Thou wilt, and always to Thy glory and to the welfare of Thy people. To our Lord, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

And, in the words of Jesus, we also pray, 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.

Please join in singing our concluding hymn, Number 347.

(Singing).

Today is the last Wednesday of the term, and so it's our last Mem Cafe gathering. So, I invite you to join us, please, downstairs in the undercroft, for refreshments after the service. We will also have communion, here, celebrating St Andrew the Apostle, this Wednesday, and also next Wednesday. So, two more chances, there.

Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God, from generation to generation, in the Church, and to Christ Jesus, forever and ever. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thanks be to God.

(Music)