

Amy Sexuaer:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Amy Sexuaer:

Welcome to the Appleton Chapel here in our Memorial Church for our daily service of Morning Prayers. Our speaker this morning is Sheila Thimba, Harvard University Dean of Administration and Finance. I invite you to please rise and join me in reading a responsive psalm found in your Black Psalter, Psalm 126. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream."

Congregation:

"Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them."

Amy Sexuaer:

"The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

Congregation:

"Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south."

Amy Sexuaer:

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

Congregation:

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Amy Sexuaer:

You may be seated.

MUSIC:

Lord, teach me to be generous.

With my heart and soul.

Teach me to serve as you deserve.

With my heart and soul.

To give and not to count the cost.

To fight and not to heed the wounds.

To toil and not to seek for rest.

To labor and not to ask for reward.

Save that of knowing that I do your will.

I do your will.

Lord, teach me to be generous.

To be generous.

With my heart and soul.

The goal of my life is to live with God forever.

God who loves us, God who gave us life.

We must hold ourselves in balance, in calmness.

Listening, listening.

Nurturing, nurturing.

Knowing, knowing, knowing, knowing, knowing.

(singing) love within us.

Within us.

Lord, teach me to be generous.

With my heart and soul.

Lord, teach me to be generous.

With my heart and soul and mind and thoughts.

Lord, teach me to be generous.

With my heart and soul and mind and thoughts and words and deeds and prayers and actions.

Teach me to be generous.

Teach me to be generous.

Teach me to be generous, Lord.

Knowing that I do your will.

Knowing that I do your will.

Teach me to be generous.

To be generous.

With my heart and soul.

Sheila Thimba:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Sheila Thimba:

This is a love letter to Gen Z. The psalmist in Psalm 78 sings, "I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their descendants. We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done." You might remember when, earlier this summer, we received dire warnings about an unusual synchronization in the life cycles of periodical cicadas. Two generations,

brood 13 and brood 17, matured at the same time, leading to the arrival of an eye-popping one trillion adult cicadas across 16 states for the first time in 221 years. While this loud, and frankly scary, generational syncopation in the insect kingdom was underway, a generational scuffle was occurring in the American one.

President Biden was pressured to pass the baton to Vice President Harris by those who deemed him too old to handle the demands of the most powerful political position in the world. In parallel, the octogenarian Republican candidate for president acquiesced to the same pressure by picking a much younger vice presidential running mate. Meanwhile, halfway across the world, Gen Z was entering the political stage in strong opposition to their elders.

In Kenya, they protested a repressive finance bill, drafted by a corrupt parliament, by taking to the streets for multiple weeks, ultimately forcing politicians to withdraw the punishing taxation plan. In neighboring Uganda, copycat protests followed in quick succession. The geriatric President Museveni has held power in his iron grip since 1986, nine years before the first Gen Zs were born. Beginning August 1st in Nigeria, Gen Zs stormed cities for 10 days in a show of rage against the bad governance of their 72-year-old President Tinubu. In Bangladesh, a Gen Z revolution toppled the 76-year-old prime minister, and wrenched the government away from the ruling party. There were generational struggles elsewhere, including right here on our campus.

I have been struck by these dramatic contests between generations, in both nature and human affairs. I'm struck by how cliched these rivalries are, as each generation asserts dominance and righteousness. I'm exhausted to be in the sandwich generation, watching as grandparents and grandchildren disappoint each other by failing to reach their own stated aspirations. I have felt helpless to broker peace. Are there other Gen Xs in the room? Do you find yourselves wishing, like I do, that humans were more like cicadas? That there were 221 years between periods when too loud and assertive generations would emerge on the scene at the same time?

The scriptures, as always, are my safe harbor. In Psalm 78, I find a promise of harmony between generations through the telling by one generation to the next of the goodness of God and of His faithfulness across generations. The psalmist ticks through a number of the wonders God has done. He established a testimony in Jacob, appointed a law in Israel, divided the sea, led His people with a cloud in the daytime and the light of fire by night, cleaved the rocks and gave them drink out of the great depths, rained down manna from heaven and feathered fowls, like the sand of the sea.

And when, despite these wonders, the people sinned against God and were punished, as only the Old Testament God of the internet meme would punish, redemption comes. The priests fall on their swords, and the enemies mocked. The Psalm ends with this beautiful verse. "So, He fed them according to the integrity of His heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of His hands." By refocusing my attention from the contention visible in the material world to this spiritual arc, from conflict to resolution, I am reminded that the purpose of my life as a believer is ordered by God. As one generation makes its claims against the other, I take instruction of my purpose from the exultation in verse 4: tell "the next generation the praiseworthy good deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done."

Praise and gratitude are bonds for my soul, and can be olive branches across conflict. They are also a baton to be passed from one generation to the next in the long race to enlightenment. They're an expression of love from parents to children, from Gen X to Gen Z, sometimes on behalf of the boomers. Join me in this prayer by John Russell. "O God, the great creator and sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, Father of angels and men, giver of life, protector of all creatures, mercifully accept this as my morning sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, which I desire to offer, with all humility, to your divine majesty. You are praised, O Lord, by your words, and magnified by everything which you have created. Amen."

Congregation:

"O God, the great creator and sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, Father of angels and men, giver of life, protector of all creatures, mercifully accept this as my morning sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, which I desire to offer, with all humility, to your divine majesty. You are praised, O Lord, by your words, and magnified by everything which you have created. Amen."

Amy Sexuaer:

I invite you, if you are able, to please rise and say with me the prayer that 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:

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Amy Sexuaer:

Please join in singing our concluding hymn, number 247, Breathe on me, Breath of God.

MUSIC:

Breathe on me, Breath of God.

Fill me with life anew.

That I may love what thou dost love.

And do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God.

Until my heart is pure.

Until with thee I will one will.

To do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God.

Till I am wholly thine.

Until this earthly part of me.

Glow with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God.

So shall I never die.

But live with thee the perfect life.

Of thine eternity.

Amy Sexuaer:

This transcript was exported on Sep 26, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

Now, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Amy Sexuaer:

Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thanks be to God.