

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Good morning.

Congregation:

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The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Welcome to the Appleton Chapel here in our Memorial Church for our daily service of morning prayers, the last day of the academic year. There's an error in your place.

Mat. Our speaker this morning is the Senior Choir Secretary, Soren Choi. I invite you please to rise and join in saying our responsorial Psalm, which is Psalm 1.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Congregation:

But his delight is in the Law of the Lord and on His Law he meditates day and night.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. His leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Congregation:

[inaudible 00:05:02] not so, but are like the chaff which the wind carrieth away.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

Congregation:

For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the [inaudible 00:05:20] shall perish.

Soren Choi:

Ephesians 4:25: "Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body."

Tell me the truth, because anything less is a disservice to me. This is a premise I've tried to live my life by. Within our postmodern society where it feels like every statement is met with either a hollow echo of support or an adversarial response, I feel strongly that a lack of honesty in our daily lives is making us all lonelier individuals.

Yeah, that sounds stupid. Of course we should be honest. And yet, if we really think about it, we're constantly pretending: supporting our friend's relationship even if we know it's unhealthy, and especially when they're the toxic one; or acting like our lives are totally put together when we really feel like we're falling apart at the seams. I'm often guilty of both, and if any of you aren't, I'd be surprised. But no amount of pretense can change the truth, and trying to convince ourselves otherwise doesn't help.

I'll give you an example. Think of what your sibling or parent most needs to hear from someone in their life right now. For me, I think my brother needs to hear that he doesn't need to do anything to earn our parents' love. I've always been high achieving and I know he feels a lot of pressure to match that.

So why have I not talked to him about this? Well, I imagine that if I were to talk to him and tell him that just because I got into Harvard doesn't mean he has to, he'd tell me I was being arrogant; so instead of addressing this, I've avoided saying anything to him for years, and this only served to hurt him.

One of my deepest regrets in life is a supportive white lie I told a few years ago. I think back to a conversation I was having with a close childhood friend in the summer of 2021 who was telling me about these new antidepressants he was taking and that he felt like they really helped him to feel less emotion. I responded with a standard, "Good for you. I'm glad you're feeling better."

It's easy to say that. What I wish I'd confronted him with was that he was also becoming a very numb person and he had very strong addictive tendencies. It's too late to tell him that now.

If we think that living until 50 is a guarantee, we're kidding ourselves; we aren't even promised tomorrow. We're spoiled to live in a country where death isn't always around the corner and we take that for granted.

When I was 15, a very angry man drove his SUV down the sidewalk. I was walking across with my family. He killed four and injured several others. My brother was nine at the time, and we were very fortunate that we all remained unhurt, but it could have easily could have been very differently for us.

All of our mortality is real and present, and we have to contend with that. In that light, intentionality and honesty is essential in our daily interactions because words unspoken leave too much room for regret.

But every good intention needs tempering. I'm quite an opinionated person, as something you know. I'm often too bluntly honest, and when you combine that with a fair amount of dramatic exaggeration, you end up pushing people away. What I really need right now is a gentler touch.

Much like my very traditional fire-and-brimstone theology, I'm used to painting with broad strokes in the public eye and saving the details and nuance for private interactions, but this really hasn't served me. Jesus may have gone and flipped the merchants' tables in the marketplace in the temple, and He did that out of righteous anger, but He did that once in 33 years.

Yeah, I'm only 22, and I spent a significant portion of those 22 years flipping proverbial tables; in this respect, I've got a lot of work to do. So tell me the truth when I'm being overzealous; anything less is a disservice to the both of us.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

I invite you please rise for the prayers.

Almighty God, You have given us grace each day at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to You, and You have promised through Your well-beloved Son that whenever two or three are gathered together in His name, You will be in the midst of them.

Fulfill now, oh Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us, granting us in this world knowledge of Your truth, and in the age to come, life everlasting. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

And now, let us pray the prayer 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 to 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 to 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 singing our concluding hymn, number 90, "God Be With You Till We Meet Again. (singing).

Congregation:

(singing).

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

God be with you until we meet again. I hope to meet you again downstairs in just a few minutes at Mem Cafe for refreshments. Thank you all for a wonderful year. Morning prayers. Thank you especially to the Ferris Choral Fellows for their wonderful gifts that they have shared with us this year.

And of course, Ed and Carson and David, as well, for all the work that they do to bless these services.