

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Please be seated.

Good morning,

Many of you know me, but for those of you who don't, I am Darden Purrington. I have been an active member of this congregation for what feels like forever to me but turns out to only be around ten years.

I started coming to church years ago because my parents mandated it, but over time I grew to enjoy the time I spent in worship on Sundays, particularly the music. When I was in my early teens, although we never had a sit down, outright conversation, I felt like I had a bit of a choice, to go to church or to let my parents sleep in after a hard week at work. I chose to be the obnoxious child who would knock on the door and ask what time we were leaving. There is something beautiful about our Sunday morning worship that I wanted more of.

I will deviate really quickly just to say that the one thing I could put my finger on as beautiful was the music. I used to sit in these pews and sing along and wish that someday I could be a part of that magnificent choral group whose voices rained down upon the congregation weekly. It has been a blessing to me to have been able to hear them for so many years and to have had the opportunity to sing with them for the last two, they are my inspiration to sing and I am infinitely lucky to have gotten to be a part of their group. But I digress.

Actually that wasn't too big of a digression now that I think about it and it leads nicely into something my dad told me in passing once. He said: "Everything beautiful comes from God." What I find amazing is that in all the different experiences I have had, I have been able to see God in them all. In theater I've seen people come together and give their hearts away to the audience and each other, and in that beauty I see God. In sailing I have seen teammates lift each other up after brutal, crushing defeats, and in that action I see God. In All-District choir I have both seen and heard 225 voices from disparate different backgrounds come together to make a beautiful noise, and in that noise I hear God and in the joy of the students participating I see God. I am but a child and I have seen all of these evidences of God's goodness and His love, I can only imagine what can be witnessed over a lifetime.

Perhaps one of the most important things I have gleaned from having been witness to all of this beauty is that God is everywhere and you don't actually have to go

somewhere to find Him. A few years ago, my confirmation class went on pilgrimage. Adam and I were unable to go for our own different reasons. I had already agreed to a job up near where my grandparents lived before the dates were set and chose to honor that commitment over traveling to Ireland with my group. Some of you may remember that while they were gone there was a once a day blog. I made it a point to read every single one and try to picture what it was like there. I would read the blog and then go outside and sit, or sometimes walk through the woods. Over that week, I found that I could find peace outside wherever I was. I found that I did not have to even leave the place I slept at night to have that closeness with God. I found that “thin spaces” don’t have to be searched out and discovered, they can be created in your own backyard.

I plan to take my “thin space” with me this summer, as I head up to New London, Connecticut to begin my training as a Cadet at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. I know there will be times where I need strength greater than my own this summer, as well as over the course of the rest of my life, and I also know that God will lend me His strength when I need it. It has been a blessing to me to have learned this lesson so early in my life, that God is with me all the time. That God is with all of us, all the time.