

(organ music)

- Good morning and welcome to this service of worship here at Duke Chapel. We remind those of you who are locals that we have over a dozen different worship services every week here in the chapel. Among them are noon prayer every weekday in Memorial Chapel. Also every Thursday at 5:15 is a service of Choral Vespers in Memorial Chapel that is having increasing popularity with many in our community. And this Wednesday is another in our series of lunch time chamber concerts at 12:30 here in the chapel. We're glad to have you with us. Let us continue our worship. ♪ Beautiful Savior ♪ ♪ Lord of all nations ♪ ♪ Son of God and Son of Man ♪ ♪ Glory and honor ♪ ♪ Praise, adoration ♪ ♪ Now and forevermore be thine ♪ ♪ Now and forevermore be thine ♪ (organ music) ♪ All creatures of our God and king ♪ ♪ Lift up your voice and with us sing ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou, burning sun with golden beam ♪ ♪ Thou, silver moon with softer gleam ♪ ♪ Oh praise him, Oh praise him ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou rushing wind that art so strong ♪ ♪ Ye clouds that sail in heaven along ♪ ♪ Oh praise him, alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice ♪ ♪ Ye lights of evening find a voice ♪ ♪ Oh praise him, oh praise him ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou flowing water, pure and clear ♪ ♪ Make music for thy Lord to hear ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou fire so masterful and bright ♪ ♪ That givest man both warmth and light ♪ ♪ Oh praise him, oh praise him ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Dear mother earth, who day by day ♪ ♪ Unfoldest blessings on our way ♪ ♪ Oh praise him, alleluia ♪ ♪ The flowers and fruits that in thee grow ♪ ♪ Let them his glory also show ♪ ♪ Oh praise him, oh praise him ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ And all ye men of tender heart ♪ ♪ Forgiving others, take your part ♪ ♪ Oh sing ye, alleluia ♪ ♪ Ye who long pain and sorrow bear ♪ ♪ Praise God and on him cast your care ♪ ♪ Oh praise him, oh praise him ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ And thou most kind and gentle death ♪ ♪ Waiting to hush our latest breath ♪ ♪ Oh praise him, alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou leadest home the child of God ♪ ♪ And Christ our Lord the way hath trod ♪ ♪ Oh praise him, oh praise him ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Let all things their creator bless ♪ ♪ And worship him in humbleness ♪ ♪ Oh praise him, alleluia ♪ ♪ Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son ♪ ♪ And praise the Spirit, Three in One ♪ ♪ Oh praise him, oh praise him ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia ♪

- Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than either we desire or deserve. Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

- Let us pray.

All: Open our hearts and minds, oh God, by the power of your Holy Spirit so that is the word is read and proclaimed we might hear with joy what you say to us this day. Amen.

- The first lesson is taken from the Book of Isaiah. Oh Lord, thou art my God. I will exalt thee, I will praise thy

name for thou has done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. For thou has made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin, the palace of aliens is a city no more. It will never be rebuilt. Therefore, strong peoples will glorify thee, cities of ruthless nations will fear thee, for thou has been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the blast of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall, like heat in a dry place. Thou dost subdue the noise of the aliens as heat by the shade of a cloud so the song of the ruthless is stilled. On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And God will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. The Lord will swallow up death forever and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces. And the reproach of God's people, the Lord will take away from all the earth. For the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, lo, this is our God. We have waited for God that he might save us. This is the Lord, we have waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in God's salvation for the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain. Here ends the first lesson. (organ music) (congregation singing) (organ music) (congregation singing)

- A reading from the gospel according to Saint Matthew. And again, Jesus spoke to them in parables saying, the realm of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast, but they would not come, Again, he sent other servants saying, tell those who are invited behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed and everything is ready. Come to the marriage feast. But they made light of it and went off, one to a farm, another to business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully and killed them. The king was angry and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, the wedding is ready but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find. And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good, so the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there someone who had no wedding garment and he said to the guest, friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment? And the guest was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, bind this one hand and foot and cast this person into the outer darkness. There, men and women will weep and gnash their teeth for many are called, but few are chosen. Here ends the gospel. (organ music) (choir singing)

- The lesson from Paul's letter to the Philippians. I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I complain of want for I have learned in whatever state I am to be content. I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. In any and all circumstances, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want, I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble, and you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me except only you, for even in Thessalonica, you sent me help once and again. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit which increases to your credit. I have already received full payment and more. I am filled having received from Epaphroditus the gifts which you sent, and my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory, for ever and ever. Amen. Frankly, I didn't want to be at the meeting that night. I detest meetings, even

church meetings. Especially church meetings. But as the representative to the board from the Commission on Ecumenical Basketball, I felt that I should be there at the monthly meeting of the board. We met in the Seekers Sunday School classroom. We sat in rows of fold out metal chairs. There was prayer, and then the minutes of last month's meeting were read. And the chairman rose and said, I call to order this meeting of the board of First Church Philippi. Paul, as many of you know, someone who's meant a great deal to our church, is in jail. Caesar's got him. Oh, he might've been free, but Paul wanted a trial in Rome and so now he's in Rome awaiting a fate there which from all accounts can't be good. And later in this meeting, I want you to know that we'll have prayer for Paul and then we'll receive a love offering which we will send to him to strengthen him in his time of trouble. Oh, what happened to the last love offering we sent Paul, said a voice toward the rear of the room. There was muffled, mumbling. Well, if you'll just let me finish, Gladys, I was trying to tell you that tonight we have received a letter from Paul, written in his own hand, straight from prison, a letter smuggled out by Epaphroditus. You remember, we sent Epaphroditus to Rome to take Paul the cookies and the check, the love offering which we received, and Epaphroditus has brought a letter from Paul expressing no doubt, Paul's gratitude for what we sent him. Now knowing what a good letter Paul can write and how he's been on our minds constantly, let's disperse with the other business and I'll get on with reading the letter. And I'll skip over the details and just share the important things with you. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, et cetera, grace and peace to you from God. I want you to know that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel so that it has become known throughout the whole Praetorian Guard and all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. He's in prison because he ran afoul of Felix and Agrippa on the law actually, chirped up Gladys. Well, we know that Gladys, but you know Paul, he's probably trying to put the best face on things. Power of positive thinking, stiff upper lip and all, right. Would you allow me to continue, please? For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Well, let's skip over this, there's a good deal of this and that. Do all things without grumbling or questioning. Be glad and rejoice with me. What does it say about the gifts, the cookies, the money? Yeah, what did he say about the money we sent him? Well, let's see. Here he says, look out for the dogs, look out for evil doers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. Mutilate what? Dogs, what? Well you know, Paul. For many of whom I have often told you, and now tell you even with tears, are enemies of the cross of Christ. Their god is their belly. Belly? What about the stuff we sent him? I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Now who told him about Euodia and Syntyche? Epaphroditus, we told you to just to take the package up there, not to go telling tales on Euodia and Syntyche. Well, things we're now in an uproar. The meeting was in danger of disintegrating. Might be worse than last year's board meeting when we had that big row over whether to invite the gospel dog act for Church School Rally Day. Oh wait, wait, said the chairman. Here it is, here it is. That's about time he mentioned the gifts, said Gladys. I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. What does he mean by "at length," a voice said toward the rear. We got there as quick as we could. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I complain of want for I have learned in whatever state I am to be content. I know how to be abased. I know how to abound. In any and all circumstances, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Yet it was kind of you to share in my trouble. Even in Thessalonica, you sent me. Not that I seek the gift, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent and my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Jesus Christ, to God our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. And that's the end of his letter. Well, did I miss something, asked Gladys after

an awkward silence. Well, Paul's just eaten up with gratitude isn't he, said some wag in the back of the room. It took him the whole letter to get around to saying thanks. Then he never really said thanks, said another. Well, that Paul's a good letter writer, but he sure doesn't know how to write a thank you note, said somebody else. Oh, sure, said Herbert Smeed, sure he preaches grace, but when it comes to accepting a little Philippian grace, he doesn't know what to do with it. And what did he mean by you had no opportunity and at length and not that I complain and not that I ever sought the gift. Well, said Myrtle, it just all goes to show that preachers are human too. Well Paul's a little too human for me, Herbert said. Look, said someone, show a little consideration. What you're reading there in that letter are the words of a man in prison. I know what it's like to be in prison, I was in prison during the last persecution four or five months. Starts to work on a man. You lose interest in things, you have to detach yourself from life. You do it in order to survive. You see what you're reading there is the indifference of a man who's trying to survive in jail. Perhaps, said Euodia, Paul really meant to say more and he didn't have time to finish the letter like he wanted to. Epaphroditus, are you sure you got here with a whole letter? You didn't lose something on the way maybe? Everybody turned around and looked over in the back corner where Epaphroditus had been sitting quietly until now. Slowly he rose to his feet. Well, he said, he was overjoyed. You should've seen him when I brought him the things that you sent him, he loved the cookies. But he quickly laid all that aside and then he started asking me about how you were doing, who was well, who was sick. I wish you could've been there. He really was grateful. But I think Paul just wants us to keep things in perspective. What things, said somebody. Well, just things, said Epaphroditus. Things a lot like, it's like Paul said earlier in the letter. Whether I live or I die, whether I'm in prison or I'm set free, it's enough. I'm content. If you read the whole letter, you'll find that it's a theme that crops up again and again throughout the letter. As Paul says, he believes that being in prison has actually served to help his work. He can't witness outside of jail, so now he's witnessing inside of jail. Whether by life or by death, whether he is in want or he is abounds, whether he's close to us or far away, he says it over and over again. The cause goes on. Whether or not Paul has material things or he has nothing, you see, I think Paul is free. He's free even though he's in jail. And he wrote that letter for us on the outside so that we might be free. And there was silence in the room. The silence of knowing that one has been addressed. The gospel Paul preached was not dependent on whether or not he was with us or far away. It wasn't dependent on whether he lived or he died. Paul had been paid in full. Our meeting had become a meeting. We were beginning to understand Paul was grateful, but at the same time, he wanted to tell us that he was free even of our gratitude, even of our gifts. He was free. If he got the gifts, Paul would serve God. If he didn't get the gifts and Epaphroditus had never gotten there, he would serve God. Now that may sound discourteous or even ungrateful, but Paul had to remind us even as he was thanking us that he had learned to be content. In hunger and want and riches and poverty, even if Caesar did not set him free, he was free. I was at a college where a man was being honored for giving \$1 million to establish a chair of English literature. One speaker at the banquet got up after the other praising the man's success in business, praising the way he had lifted himself up from poverty by his initiative, praising his generosity, and when they got through, the man himself rose and all he said was, I gave this money to this college in the hopes that it will be used to help these students learn how unimportant money really is. Then he sat down. Paul was defined by neither wealth nor poverty, freedom or imprisonment, success or failure, even life or death. He was free, and thus Paul could say, in whatever state I find myself, I have learned to be content. Oh, we like to picture Paul in Rome pacing up and down in the cell every hour on the hour asking the guard, is there anything for Paul, Saint Paul, addressed, anything from Thessalonica? Nothing even from Galatia? I got myself beaten up

for preaching to those people. Nothing even from the Galatians? But no, Paul was free. His relationship to other people, like the people at First Church Philippi, was based not on his need for gratitude or gifts. And so Paul could say in sincerity, I've already been paid in full, you don't owe me a thing. It was kind of you to share in my trouble, but I didn't have to have it. I talked to a man who spent his life teaching teachers how to teach. And he told me in his years of work, the one essential characteristic for a good teacher. And I bet this would apply to students, to doctors, to parents, to lots of people. The one essential characteristic for a good teacher is that a good teacher must be content with the sowing rather than the reaping. A good teacher has got to find enough satisfaction out of just planting the seed and doesn't have to be around for the harvest. It is rare, it is rare in this life to find a truly free person, a person who can say in all honesty, whether I live or I die, whether I'm in want or I abound, I succeed or I fail, it's enough, I'm content. We're not talking about stoic resignation or throwing up the hands or whatever will be will be kind of drivel. Paul knows nothing of such. We're just talking about those who find a means of rising above present circumstances, be those circumstances good or ill. I think this is what's meant in the gospels by Jesus' peace that passes all understanding. I think it belongs to those who are confident in the worth of that to which they have given their lives despite the validation or lack of it given by the world. Paul told First Church Philippi if you need the praise or the validation or the adulation of the system or happiness or riches in life to make your life, there's a good chance you're gonna be miserable. What you need is some way to be content. Whether you abound, are abased, are in plenty or want, wherever you find yourself to be able to say, I've been paid in full. The reporters tracked her down early morning at her laboratory to tell her that the call had just come in from Stockholm. She had been awarded the Nobel Prize in botany. They crowded around the door when she came out. What are you gonna do with the money, somebody said. Is it good to see that your work has finally been recognized by your colleagues? Does it make a difference that you're a woman? She said, well, I hate that all of you have gotten up so early. I've got a lot to do. Thank you all for coming. Then she turned around and went right back in her laboratory. Amen. (organ playing) (congregation singing)

- The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Let us pray. How can we pray to thee, thou holy and hidden God whose ways are not our ways, who reign us in mystery beyond the realm of time and space. Yet, how can we not pray to the eternal God who knowest what it is to be human because thou hast walked among us, breaking with us the bread of our affliction and drinking deep of the cup of despair. Hear us oh God, both in our words and in our silence. For it is often the silence that speaks better of our need. Speak thy joy unto our silence. Breathe thy life into our less than life. Not for our sakes only, but for the sake of those to whom with thy life in us, we may ourselves bring life. Hear now gracious God, the prayers of all thy children everywhere for forgiveness and healing, for courage, for faith, for hope in times of despair, for endurance in the midst of trial. Hear our prayers for the needs of others this day, for the homeless, the destitute, the sick and the dying, for the hungry and for those who seek to battle the causes of hunger, for victims of violence everywhere, and for those who know no other way than violence, for those who govern the nations of the world, especially those which are conflict torn, for women and men who suffer for the sake of conscience, for those who mourn the loss of loved ones, for this university that it may be a center for sound learning and the pursuit of wisdom, for the entire human

family, that the walls which separate us may be broken down and that in thy good time, all nations and races may serve thee in harmony around thy heavenly throne. Deep beneath all our asking, oh God, hear the secret song of every human heart lauding and magnifying thy name for being what thou art. Make strong and clear this song of praise within each of us until it bursts forth at last to thy glory and our salvation. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Now in the spirit of thanksgiving, let us offer our gifts and ourselves unto God. (organ music) (organ music) (choir singing) (organ music) (congregation singing)

- Almighty and most merciful God from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, we give thee praise and thanks for all thy mercies. Thy goodness hath created us, thy bounty hath sustained us, thy patience hath born with us, thy love hath redeemed us. Give us a heart to love and serve thee and enable us to show our thankfulness for all thy goodness and mercy by giving up ourselves unto thy service. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ who taught us to pray with confidence.

All: 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, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. (organ music) (congregation singing)

- Now may the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always. (choir singing) (organ music)