

(soft music) (classical music) (choir hymning)

- Before we proceed with our service of worship. (coughing) Let me remind you that there are perhaps hundreds of persons outside who would like to be inside. And though it perhaps may be a little more sultry and a little closer in many ways for you to try to move closer together. Let me ask you if there is space on the row where you're seated, please move toward the center aisle, so that the marshals may seek persons on the outside aisles. Let us continue our worship of God. My dear brothers and sisters, children of God. If we would honestly seek renewal in order to serve God, we must begin by being honest about our past failures. Can any of us then deny that our lack of vision, our self interest and pride have separated us from those who stand in need? All of us have been guilty of postponing good words and actions until the time for saying and doing was passed. Therefore, let us honestly confess before God the things that we have done or have failed to do, which have caused us to be less, than our true selves. Let us pray. Oh God, in whose mystery we abide, and by whose mercy we are redeemed, we confess our sin against one another and against you, all our transgressions hidden and open. The evil done and the goodness left undone. We have deceived ourselves about ourselves, and worn masks, and not trusted in love. We confess that we have been careful with things, careless with persons, adept in taking, awkward in giving, in love with our fears, and in fear of our loves. Forgive us for the times of our anger, and the occasions of our stupidity, for the times of our cowardice, and the places of our hesitation. For every time we did not love the goodness of persons, nor praise the glory of God. Forgive us, lift us up and heal us this day, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Let us continue in silent prayer with our personal needs and concerns. Hear the word of God, the Lord God is faithful and just, call upon the Lord while He is near, wait patiently for the Lord, wait I say on the Lord. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, oh God, you will not despise, in his name I declare unto you. Your sins are forgiven, for his sake. Amen. (soft music) (choir hymning)

- For everything there's a season, and a time for every matter under heaven. A time to be born, and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted. A time to kill and a time to heal, a time to break down and the time to build up, a time to weep and a time to laugh. A time to mourn and a time to dance. A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together. A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to seek, and a time to lose, and the time to keep, and a time to cast away. A time to rand, and a time to sow. A time to keep silence and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate. And a time for war and a time for peace. What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the sons of man to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live. Also, that it is God's gift to man that everyone should eat and drink, and take pleasure, in all his toil. And now from Romans, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with ego longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of him who subjected it, in hope.

Because the creation itself, will be set free from its to decay, and obtain the glorious Liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the spirit. We groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now, hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees, but if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise, the spirit helps us in our weakness for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches for the hearts of men, knows what is in the mind of the spirit, because the spirit intercedes for the saints, according to the will of God. We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. What then, shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us." (soft music) (choir hymning) Let us affirm our faith. We are not alone, we live in God's world. We believe in God, who has created and is creating, who has come in the true man, Jesus, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by his spirit. We trust him, he calls us to be in his church, to celebrate his presence, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus crucified and risen, our judge and our hope, in life in death, in life beyond death, God is with us, we are not alone, thanks be to God. The Lord be with you.

- And also with you.

- Let us pray. Here, oh God, this prayer of Thanksgiving, which we offer to you. For the homes from which we came, for parents, and guardians, and sponsors who believe in education, and made it possible for us to be at Duke, and to leave this university as its sons and daughters.

- He has mercy.

- For the interplay of the colleges and schools, undergraduate, graduate, and professional, which widen our horizon and deepened our understanding and stretched our imagination.

- He has mercy.

- For people, all kinds of people. For our classmates who grew with us, and accepted us and loved us as friends, for teachers who realized that a good instructor teaches a person, as well as a subject. For administrators, maids, secretaries, maintenance crews, known and unknown, who worked for our benefit.

- He has mercy.

- For memories which will challenge us, the colors in the fall, the empty quad in winter, the gardens in the spring, the library, the lab, the chapel, the Cambridge in, newspapers, flyers, and placards, for all memories.

- He has mercy.

- For the fact that this university still pays more than lip service to (speaking foreign language), to knowledge, which is linked with reverence, to insight that has a place for piety, to an all before the universe, and before our neighbor, which may be the beginning of wisdom.

- He has mercy.

- For you, your profits, psalmists and law givers, for Jesus of Nazareth and for your Holy Spirit.

- (indistinct).

- Oh God, our father, whose light guides us in our darkness, whose wisdom informs us and our ignorance, whose love inspires us in our indifference, whose peace calms us in our turmoil, and in whose will we find perfect freedom. We rejoice, oh God in the personal, and family, and community celebrations that are ours today, we pray, oh, father, for those now ready to make this university, their Alma mater. Those who have studied the arts, literature, history, business, mathematics, science, religion, and other subjects known only slightly to them, just a short while ago. Those who for four long and hard, but rewarding and satisfying years have studied diligently to learn, those for whom night has often been as day, and day, often as night. Those who have known the lab or library, or study desk better than their bed. Those, oh God, whose experiences here, only skimmed the surface. And those whose experiences also touched the depths of their lives. Oh God, continue your mercy to those who have gained a glimpse of their true potential, to those who have found excitement in new ideas and new thoughts. To those who feel they have come to a high moment in their lives, to those who feel they have made another step on their way. To those who have begun to know the satisfaction of serving others, teaching, healing, leading, helping. But, oh God, in this day of need, remind each of us of the world beyond this university, the hurt, loneliness, poverty, disease, ignorance, prejudice, and greed. May at least one member of this class make a difference for good in your world. No, oh God, may each one make his or her world pure, more honest, more loving, more kind, more humane. May religion and learning, continue to guide and direct each one, now, oh God accept us as we are. Help us to become who we should be, and may our lives give glory, praise, and honor to you, now and forever. Now let us pray together. 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 thy is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. President Sanford has asked me to say to you that prior to the benediction, near the close of this service of worship, he will have made some decision about where the services this afternoon will be held. And at the moment it doesn't appear that, that decision will be very hard, but we're still praying. (laughing) Teacher, writer, ecumenist, committed churchman, incomparable, preacher, man concerned about his fellow human being. Friend of this university, friend of all, who seek to know and to believe, we welcome back to Duke University, to Duke Chapel, and to this baccalaureate service. And the Reverend Dr. Albert Adler, professor of systematic theology, at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. Welcome Dr. Adler. And in the name of God, we hear your word.

- Under the Holy Spirit. Amen. It is a great joy to be here. If I had wondered about symbolism, and a Methodist related university, I would have thought of the 19th century debates about immersion and sprinkling. (laughing) But it strikes me that this is going too far. (laughing) And if there's anything we can do together during this service to affect either the weather, or the wisdom of the president, (clears throat) let us do so. (laughing) But without failing to listen. (clears throat) It was 35 years ago to this day that I preached my first university sermon in this chapel. And it is a week from this day that I shout officially retire from my academic career. So that in a very real census sentimental moment for me, my first and my last sermon, in one of the great pulpits, in this country and the world. Now, there never was a time when it was more important for both young and old together, to be honest, in our probings of the paradox of our mutual interdependence. You are our future, about which we are bound to have some misgivings. We are your past about which you are bound to have some impatience and even disdain. There is, and always has been a generation gap. One can imagine Adam saying to Eve, if we had more of the Genesis story, as they exited Eden, just think darling, the very first age of transition. And then later pitching into Kane with now, "When I was young." But if our car problem was nothing more than our own version of this ancient perplexity, all we would need to plead for on either side would be more intelligent, love, more patient forbearance. Generations follow each other, times and seasons change. The impatient young grow up soon enough to be dismayed by their successors, and so the world keeps turning, which of course was Coherus point in that rather pessimistic passage that President Sanford read for our first lesson. And yet it has begun to dawn on some of us veteran generation Watchers and on many of you as well, that there is a new dimension in our current baformets, that the devil our best attempts to set the human past into a meaningful perspective, and our human future into a credible, or hopeful prospect. The fact is, that there's even a generation gap between you and your predecessors of the 1960s, just as there was between them and the college crops of 1950s. What we're seeing in my judgment is much more than ordinary change. It is rather the signal of a vast reorientation of modern man toward the human future itself. Time was, when the safest themes for good commencement sermons or bad ones for that matter, as I have heard in the Lords, plenty, (laughs) were hope and progress. Which could assume that each new generation was being commissioned to strive for what their parents had aspired to before then. To pave the highway of human progress, a few leagues further, onward and upward. Our troubles though grave and they were grave too, were at least courage bubble in principle. The only thing we have to fear is fear itself. Roosevelt's famous slogan became our rallying cry. Whatever the short range, the long range human prospect was hopeful, and it was our job to promote that prospect. We all know of course, that your generation is often compared to those of the 50s, but quite mistakenly, as I see it, I knew that crew very well, and they were neither apathetic nor uncaring, really. They were quite simply overconfident. World War had faded from their memory. The Korean episode had ended in what was said to be a tolerable stalemate. Split Nick was a useful prod to our national effort. The air was still breathable, the water pure, and all human problems soluble if only, if only this, or only that. Jim Crow had been dealt a mortal blow, the South was making giant strides into modernity. The people we turned out at our place during that decade had experienced more change in their lifetimes than any previous student generation ever. And most of them were hopeful about themselves and their future. We were selectively inattentive to many, a festering sore, in our society and our world, but we were moving education and social amelioration was somehow meshing together. The future was ours for making. And then came an overreaching of that overconfidence in the firestorms of the 60s. The story of this incredible disaster has been superbly told by Bill O'Neill and his, "Coming Apart: An Informal History of America in the

1960s." It was a time when our intentions were noble, but our experiments largely futile. When rising expectations turned impatience into a moral virtue. When pent up outrage exploded into violence. And it was all based on the reckless premise that if the establishment could be toppled, or badly mauled enough, the aftermath was bound to be more humane. David Napier had a rousing sermon entitled "The Time for Burning", others had Molotov cocktails. There was a constant vision throughout the decade from the Port Huron Statement, which was a classic to Charley Reich's "The Greening of America", which was a road to (indistinct). And that was that our belief in progress, in eventual progress, had suddenly turned apocalyptic. If humanity is our eventual prospect, why wait for it? In a country that put a man on the moon, can surely, and then you can go on, make a peaceable world, erase poverty, usher in a new epoch of brotherhood. You can supply one utopian predicate, or another, for your prophetic conclusion. Now, how differently it all turned out? How quickly the dust of death settled on the counterculture? The establishment was mauled all right, but not toppled. The universities were battered, all right, but they survived and are still licking their wounds and the scorched groves of academe. Our defeating Endo China brought me the peace in our national unity here at home, and Watergate is cutting off this nation at the knees, with the worst yet to come. I will remember Henry Luce in the 50s speaking solemnly about the American century. He knows better now, I suppose, but the rest of us are left thrashing about in the throws of the most tragic role reversal in American history. Even back of Luce, I remember Lincoln Steffens, the radical hero of my youth. He'd been to Russia, and he had brought back that mind blowing epigram. "We have seen the future and it works." Now my own clearest impression of you, that is to say our first student generation of this decade, is that you are more prescient and foresighted, than some of the rest of us. That you have already come to suspect the utopian visions of your predecessors. You have sensed however, dimly, and even without all those heavy think pieces by Robert Heilbroner, Roberto Vaka and others, that almost nothing is working very well, in contemporary society, here or anywhere else in the world. You do not have to be told that the political process is by way of disintegrating in almost, every country on the globe, the cream has clabbered even in Australia. You realize in part, at least what the brute facts of the limited resources for human habitation on this planet, really add up to. How limited our human resources are for coping with relentless crisis. Our future was once defined as the Age of Aquarius, by the new left and the weather men, weather persons, we would say now. By Dr. Spock, Bill Coffin, the Brothers Barragan and Ali, and where of all those flowers going?(laughs) And the irony has been compounded by Dr. Karl Menninger asking us in high prophetic Dudgeon, whatever became of sin, as if he didn't know. And Maria Manes in Newsweek pleading pathetically for a rebirth of moral conscience. In short, we have seen the future, and it doesn't work. Neither the future we once thought we had, nor any variation of it now apparent. Your generation therefore, stands at a very different point on history is timeline. It's your unwelcome business to respond to a very different future, from the one we had hoped to pass on to you. In your own lifetime, almost every one of the great energizing traditions in Western society for at least four centuries, has begun to fray and frazzle out. And for no single cause either, and therefore, with no credible single scapegoat. Number one, the Renaissance enlightenment traditions of form and reason. Number two, the Protestant reformation God's grace is man's soul hope. Number three, the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation of sacral alternative to secularism. Number four, European-American imperialism, that went with white supremacy and vice-versa. Male chauvinism and chivalry, the Marxist vision of heaven on earth without priestly or Borzois oppression. And seven, even the idea of progress, doubtful now for the first time, since it took from root in 18th century, Europe. Every one of these great movements has lost its magic, with no emergent or conceivable alternative

that looks really promising. Yours is the first generation in Western history to take zero population growth and a negative GMP, for positive values. Now, there is a flip side to this dismal record and that's the rest of the sermon. (laughing) And its theme is simply this, that the human spirit is more indomitable and resilient than we doomsday prophets sometimes remember. This is not a retract tape of my diagnosis just offered. No concession that man on his own has any more of a chance for his full human potential, than he has ever had, which is to say, zip. It is simply to reckon with the fact that societies have come on glue before. And that in such dark age is the most authentic human spirits, have sunk that taproots in other soils than materialism, and secular good fortune. Civilizations come and go, but all the ways in the gathering, dusk, there have been heroes of faith, pioneers of the spirit, builders for the long future. Most of these builders were nameless, but we all more of our human heritage than we know to their courage, that came from deep personal sources than what we call optimism. One thanks to Boethius, Sir Cassiodorus, Sir Mildmay of the Puritans who survived the wreckage of their seventh century 17th century Commonwealth in England, and help build America with its rubble. Just now though, it happens that I'm thinking most especially of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Roman emperor, stoic philosopher, prophet of the doom of that grand Augustine version of peace and law, for the whole civilized world. The man who with Augustine of Hippo, two centuries later, created a special genre of intensely personal literature, which struck a vital balance between withdrawal and involvement. He's, especially in my mind just now, because over this past year, one of my colleagues, John Dashner and I, came upon the same unexpected discovery. He and in a class, I in tutorial conferences that have all the classics between Homer and Dante, more undergraduate students found Marcus Aurelius, closer to their own present vibes, than any body else. John came finally to speak of them as "Children of Antoninus", hence my sermon title. Now, this does not mean that these young folks who must be your academic cousins somehow or other, are self-conscious stoics. They certainly are not antiquarians, nor were they unappreciative of the treasures in Homan, Plato, and Augustan and Dante, but what they found in Antoninus that impressed the most was a serenity in the midst of his constant involvements in practical affairs. His clear sighted vision of a dismal future that never stifled his commitment to public virtue in the present hour, a 42 devoid of pride or thirst for fame. They quoted him to us, as if they had found something very special that spoke to them, as if they too were right for a doctrine of Providence in place of their fading faith in progress. Your first and last business said Antoninus is to be virtuous, wherefore, whatever the dignity of human nature, yours or that of others, requires our view, set about it forth with, with no excuses for delay and speaking always out of conscience, let it be done in good nature and civility. Or again, if you can mend a matter, get on with it,(coughs) if you cannot, what good will grumbling do? Which of course is the text of the familiar prayer for the courage to change what can be changed, and fortitude to bear with what can't, and the wisdom to know what which is which. Or yet again, it is my business to oblige all mankind, to lay out my whole life for the public good, and for bad in the sort of Liberty that deprives others of theirs. And in this lifestyle, I shall be happy. How else? Or finally, remember that even the emperors purple mantle, and as you know, this was so sacred that it was treason for anybody else to wear won. The emperor's mantle is nothing more than sheep's wool twisted together and stained with the gore of a little shellfish. Now my own part I've always had to say, and still do, that Agustin serves me as a superior spiritual mentor than Antoninus. But I could see what they had in common, a serenity that kept them living, and working, and preparing for death, in the full view of encompassing disaster. Actually, when I would mention Marcus's persecution of the Christians, the students would come back with Augustine's persecution of the Donatists. Not really tit for tat, but as a function of their realism, that takes

the human flaw for granted, without condoning it, and yet without despising the humanum for it. And the part of all this for us is that, we can see now in retrospect, that even in Marcus's darkling world, a new human future was emerging out on the fringes of the empire in Africa, in the Rhone Valley, in the ghettos of Rome and Alexandria. This was why when Rome finally went under new human frontiers had already been explored by a new community of faith, hope and love, which furnished mind and heart, for a new civilization. What your generation knows, as mine never did, is that there is no Golden Age to return to, no new Eden round the band. And so you've begun to ask the alternative question, how does one live in the world as it is? And is likely to be, with realism, courage, and yet with all possible human alone and happiness. At least in your vowels, you are turning away from consumerism and materialism toward what might even be called a Puritan sense of accountability, of Puritan, still a dirty word in modern lingo. It would of course, be worth a second thought about that fake poverty, bit of yours, where you pay good money to have your clothes bedraggled for you, rather than do it yourself in honest use. (laughs) Now, what encourages me most in this grim reversal of the human prospect, is that it seems less daunting to you, or to those of you whom I know, than to many of my own generation. But this means, or could mean that you are closer to that great tradition of religious faith, that preceded the optimism of the enlightenment, and that bids fare to surviving. For true religion in the Judeo-Christian tradition is not an affair of peaks and valleys of optimism and pessimism. Men of faith do not welcome hard times, but they're not panicked by them either. They are alliance as Paul explained so long ago, is in God's transcendent power and love, forever at work in the human adventure. We are heard (indistinct) said he, but never hemmed in, bewildered, but never at our wit's in, disappointed, but never abandoned, struck down, but never driven to real despair. When a person has got past weighing his moods in the world's scales of cheerfulness and gloom, he then, can invest himself in any good cause that comes to hand with his nerves alive, to human pain and deprivation, and thus motivated to move the world, with whatever lever he can find and use. We have made a good deal of the tragic failures of the Judeo-Christian tradition and rightly so. But take it all in all, it has a better track record for serving the cause of full humanity, than other world religions, or any of the secular ideologies named them one by one. By profession at the very least, and often, in fact, the biblical tradition has stressed more than any other human freedom, dignity, and hope for all humankind in this world and the next. Thus, even if you're reading the future, as I do without much optimism, this does not at all mean withdraw from the world's agonies in any pious callousness. Incidentally, it was a Christian contemporary of Marcus Aurelius, who made this point this way. "Christians dwell in the world, even if only as sojourners, they love all men, even when persecuted by some, they may be poor, but they enrich many. They are in the world, but not of it. What the soul is to the body, that the Christians are to the world. And thus it is that I do not envy you in your prospective or deal, to which your own premonition seem already more sensitive than most of the rest of us. Nobody ever promised you a rose garden, but something far more demanding and far more worthy of your humanity. By the very same token I offer you no pity either, for your resources for the living of these days are and can be sufficient. If you are willing to rise to that challenge, in faith and joyous service in the Lord. For actually your hopes and ours are still rooted in the very same first and final ground of human fulfillment. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the love of God, and the liberating and sustaining power of the holy spirit." Now, let us suppose that I'm wrong in my estimates of your prospects. What if, what looks like dust to me, brightens into a new Dawn for you? Okay, right on, praise the Lord.

- Amen.

- But what will that avail without a sustaining faith that does not fluctuate with the opinion polls, or the Dow Jones Index? Suppose alternatively, that I'm right, and that you are in for a dreadful testing of your human capacity for self-transcendence and cosmic courage. What will that matter, if you have your faith, and hope, and love to sustain you, to guide you in your life's investments and ablations, as it has many another generation before you, and still may for many another, yet to come whenever or wherever? Some of us are bound to ask for a light, on our way into the approaching darkness. For an assurance now, of that eventual triumph of God's righteous rule that faith has promised. We might do better though, to trust the experience of Antoninus and Augustine, and their prescription for human happiness in human service. "Lay your life and your death, securely in God's care and keeping. And thus free up your hands and hearts for effectual labor in love and joy. This will give you a steadier foundation than any for knowledge of the future. It will be safer than any known way of human self-reliance." Let us pray. Almighty God, whose Providence and mercy are not offered us to make life easy, but to make it more meaningful and loving, give us courage and wisdom and such an unfaltering trust in dice sovereign grace, that we may accept our times and our tasks, with that faith, hope, and love, that live on in good times and bad. And that will bring us joy and gladness in all our efforts to glorify thee, and to serve others, in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ, who came amongst us, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life as we may ours for the love of all mankind. Amen. (soft music) (choir hymning)

- It is with much regret that I must admit that the weather has defeated us. And that the ceremonies wellbeing, Cameron Indoor Stadium. The parents and friends, will note that you have cards that will admit you until 2:45. Some cards specifically provide that we cannot provide seats in the indoor stadium, but after 2:45 any vacant seats will be filled by anyone who cares to come in. So, I think the graduates already understand the procedure and we will move and have a very good ceremony inside.

- Now, my friends fill your minds with those things that are good and deserving of praise, things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable. Put into practice the good you have learned, and the God who loves us, cares for us, and gives us peace will be with you, now and always. (choir hymning) (bell tolling) (classical music) (indistinct chattering)