

(church organ music) (church organ music) (church organ music) (church organ music)

- Good Morning. Welcome to the service of worship in Duke University Chapel. Remind you that at the conclusion of service the congregation at Duke Chapel invites you to a coffee fellowship hour downstairs in our lounge. Also, remind particularly you students, that Friday from 11 to two is our annual seminary day. Representatives from various seminaries will be here to talk with students about religious vocations. Now, let us stand for the greeting. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

- And also with you.

- The splendor of Christ shines upon us.

- Praise the Lord. (organ church music) (organ church music) (congregation singing hymn) (congregation singing hymn) (congregation singing hymn) (congregation signing hymn) (congregation singing hymn) (organ church music) (congregation singing) (congregation singing)

- Would you please turn to page 890 in your hymn book for the Confession of Faith. In the midst of an unjust world we have been chosen to bring light, comfort and healing to the oppressed. But we have turned away from this mandate and from those persons who seem unacceptable to us. Often we ourselves cry out as a broken people unable to fulfill God's righteous intentions for us. Let us confess all that separates us from God.

- Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed. By what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your son Jesus Christ have mercy on us and forgive us. That we may delight in your will and walk in your ways to the glory of your name. Amen.

- Light dawns. God reigns. Evil is overcome. God lifts us up, relieves our fears and strengthens us to stand against enemies without and within. In the name of Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Let us claim the realm of heaven offered to all who repent and follow where Christ leads. Amen. You may be seated.

- Let us pray together the Prayer for Illumination. Open our hearts and minds oh God by the power of your Holy Spirit, so that as the word is read and proclaimed, we may hear your message with joy this day. Amen. This reading is taken from the third chapter of the book of Jonah beginning with the first verse. The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, "and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a

day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, "and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on a sackcloth. This is the word of the Lord.

- Thanks be to God.

- This reading is from the first chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. Beginning with the 14th verse. Now after John was arrested Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God and saying, "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near, "repent and believe the good news." As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, "and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little further he saw James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John who were in their boat, mending their nets. Immediately he called to them and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. This is the word of the Lord.

- Thanks be to God.

- The great German pastor Helmut Thielicke kept only one picture on his desk in his study at Hamburg. It was a photograph of a group of rather grizzled looking men wearing white robes. Wearing cardboard wings. They were obviously participants in some sort of Christmas pageant. When I asked why that was the one photograph he had on his desk, Thielicke explained that those tough looking men were all prisoners in the penitentiary where he was the chaplain in Germany for a number of years. They were all murderers and thieves. And they all had had their lives transformed by Christ. Those thugs and those white robes and wings, Thielicke said, were an ever present reminder to him as a preacher, in the power of Christ. People to change. And a preacher should keep a picture like that in front of him and her in going about the task of preaching. Because a preacher is probably the last person in the world truly to believe that truth. Now I know that many of you believe that about the worst thing that could happen to a preacher is not to be heard; not to be listened to in a sermon. I work on these sermons, believe it or not. (congregation chuckling) I don't sleep well on Saturdays. Routinely refuse invitation to keg parties. All because I want to be heard. I want to do everything in my power to communicate; to be listened to. To be heard. Or so I say. I'm preaching. I'm just pouring my heart out in a sermon. I look out there among you, someone is glancing at her watch. Someone else obviously going over next week's grocery list. There's someone down on the third pew from the right, his hand has inched ever so slowly down the pew toward this vision of sophomoric pulchritude seated next to him. You're not listening! And that, you would think, is about the worst thing that could happen to somebody in the business of communication and speaking. But no, there is something worse for a preacher than not to be heard. And that is to be heard. That's right! To be heard. To be heard right down to the very depths of your being. And when I'm honest I must confess that there is something about me that takes a kind of comfort in the reassurance that you don't hear; That you cannot hear. And that even if you did hear, it probably wouldn't make any fundamental difference in your life. You wouldn't change. And I expect that I do this as a kind of mechanism of defense. Because the power to make a difference in peoples' lives, particularly the power to change their lives, is an awesome, frightening power. How many times have I urged people to do this or do that in a sermon? And yet I do so with a sense of

nervousness now for I can't get out of my head the memory of a few years ago preaching a sermon urging people to be more truthful in their dedication to Christ. That afternoon, three o'clock, got a phone call. Voice on the other end said that, "My wife and I came home, we had prayer." "After service today we decided to sell everything we have "and volunteer for mission work in South America." And I said, "I was just preaching." (congregation laughs) You only have 20 minutes to get this stuff out! You can't qualify everything sufficiently! See what I mean? If there's one thing worse than to be not to be heard, it is to be heard. It's when you really hear. Take Jonah for instance. Today's first lesson. Bit of the story of history's most reluctant prophet, Jonah. A baptist preacher living in Des Moines is called by God to go preach to the Iraqis in Baghdad. And he is shocked! Jonah says, I, a bible believing person like me, I would never be over there with people like that. And yet the voice of God persists. It relentlessly persists through a chain of all sorts of wild events until finally, Jonah says, all right, all right, I'll go. But it won't do any good. There's no point in my going over there. I'll go darn it! I'll go. And so he goes and he preaches in Baghdad. He preaches a short sermon with a very bad attitude. He gets finished. Closes the bible, says the benediction. Prepares to head for the bus and for home. But there is this stampede of people! They rush down! They throw their bodies down! They say they've been saved! They want to be, the say they've been born again! They all want to be baptized! All these hundreds of people! Everybody in the whole city of Nineveh repents! All the beings repent! In fact, this wasn't read in the scripture. You can check this out at home. But it says even the cattle repented! (congregation chuckles) You ever seen a cow repent? (congregation laughing) It's a wondrous thing. (congregation laughing) Thomas Espies from Texas, he can explain it to you later. (congregation laughing) Even the cattle repent! And Jonah just hates it. He ends by saying, I'd rather die than live. I'd rather die than live in a world where God is so unpredictable. I don't want to live where there's a possibility of such newness! Such devastating change! Oh we, oh we say we want change. But we, like Jonah, are quite comfortable in a world where the status quo is fixed eternally. And we are sure fixed in our mind exactly what God would do and would not do! Where God would go! Where God wouldn't! What people could get saved. And what couldn't. We like it that way. Oh we, we at times we will whine about the present state of affairs. But in our other moments we admit we're quit comfortable. In a world of fixedness. Nobody ever gets cured of alcoholism. Amen! Some people are just born with certain social attitudes fixed in them deterministically through economic and social, cultural, class factors! Amen! You can't teach and old dog new tricks. I've seen this as a pastor. People will come for counseling and say, "I've got this big problem and I need you "to help me to think about doing something about it." "What can I do?" And I listen and I naively say, "Well, you can do this..." No, no! I couldn't do that! That would be ridiculous! That wouldn't work! I say then, "You maybe could try this..." No, no! That would require... No, no! A few years ago I was on a panel. And the panel was discussing racism in the church. And someone on the panel said that while racism was still a big problem, she was happy to note that it seemed to be less a problem than it was, say 20 years ago, in her own experience. That while there was still much to do, the good news was much progress had been made on our racial attitudes. Well, a couple members of the panel where just indignant! How dare you say that we're less racist today than we were 30 years ago! Racism is still as big a problem than it's ever been! It's terrible! What are you talking about? Nothing has changed! Later, some cynic said that the amount of racism in any organization is in direct relationship to the number of people who make a living finding racism in an organization. Change is threatening because it requires shifts of power. It requires realignments that can be painful. Few things are more frightening to people in the business of change than change. And so the philosopher Schopenhauer and his world, his will and idea sums it all up in saying everybody believes

himself to be perfectly free. And thinks that in a moment he can commence another life. That he can become another person. But through experience he finds, to his astonishment, he is not free; his life is subjected to necessity. That in spite of all our resolutions, he does not change. And that from the beginning of his life he must play the part which he has undertaken; play it to the very end. In today's gospel, Jesus calls people to repent. Which is a fancy biblical word for change. And then we're given a couple of examples. Couple of people fishing, going about their business. Jesus says, "Come follow me." And they follow. When Jesus comes calling us to be born again, to start fresh, let go, venture forth proclaiming that there's a power let loose in the world for new. That God is yet able to work wonder! I want you to note that he did not draw a big crowd. Maybe this is what faith is. Maybe faith is not swallowing every word of the bible without choking. But maybe faith is the adventurous relationship to a living God. A willingness to come to church on Sunday morning and be shocked by the intrusions of God's power to work wonder. Jonah thought that faith meant being fixed. To know for sure what God would do and wouldn't do and with whom God would do it. Faith for Jonah was to have everything figured out and certain and sure and fixed. And Jonah got surprised! And he hated God for it. I wonder in your life, I wonder in your life right now, where is that territory that is off limits to God? For Jonah it was Nineveh. What is that land where God will not venture for you? What are those issues upon which you have already made a settled arrangement? The final decision. Who are the people in your life on whom you've given up hope and closed the door? Having lost faith they'll ever change. Oh, keep assuring yourself people don't change! Amen! Keep telling yourself God is not able to work any new thing. And the warning of today is: You, like Jonah, may be in for a jolt. Now we're going to come to the Lord's table. And you know that for centuries a debate raged in the church about this bread and this wine. What happens? What happens here in this mystery? You know, there was some Christians who said what happens is called trans-substantiation. Though the bread continue to look like bread, that bread when the priest prays the prayer, is miraculously transformed into the very the flesh of Christ. I don't know about that. I know that in Corinthians Paul tells the church at Corinth that there is a transformation that occurs when you commune. But it's not in the bread and the wine, it's in you. We, many though we are, become one 'cause it's one loaf from which we partake. And St. Augustine told his congregation when you bring that bread and wine and put it on the altar, that's you on the altar. That's you blessed and broken and handed out for the world! You become the body of Christ! Now this morning, I don't need you to believe that this wine is somehow miraculously transformed into blood. No, I need you to believe something even more wondrous. I need you to believe that you in partaking of this bread and wine can be transformed; trans-substantiated. Don't come down here. Don't hold out your empty hands. Don't dare let this bread and wine settle deep into your being if you don't wanna risk change. (clears throat) There was this sophomore I knew and she had her path here at Duke all mapped out. And next thing I knew she had taken a lurch to the left and she told me she was gonna spend her summer down in Atlanta working in a hospital for indigent men infected with AIDS. And she made this move that was what she was doing with her life. End of the year, one of the last Sundays of the school year, her mother had come over to visit her. I said to her mother, "I am so excited about your daughter!" "I just think what she's doing this summer "is just wonderful!" The mother said, "Do you?" "Yes!" "Yes!" "I just think that's just wonderful!" "What Christian witness!" "Go down there, work in inter-city Atlanta, "those men with AIDS." The mother said, "Well how would you feel "if it were your daughter?" I said, "Oh, if it were my daughter, "I'd be of course terrified!" (congregation chuckles) I heard the mother say as she went on out of the chapel, "God I hate preachers!" (congregation laughing)



♪♪ Alleluia ♪♪ Alleluia ♪♪ Alleluia ♪♪ Alleluia ♪

- Let us join together in the Prayer of Thanksgiving. The Lord be with you.

- And also with you.

- Lift up your hearts.

- We lift them up to the Lord.

- Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

- It is right to give our thanks and praise.

- It is a right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. You are the one who sent the prophets of old to speak words of truth to us. To show us the way towards light. Even when we rebelled against your way, you did not desert us but continued to love us that you might transform us into your people. And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn. (organ music playing) ♪ Holy, holy, holy ♪♪ God of power and might ♪♪ Heaven and earth are full of your glory ♪♪ Hosanna in the highest ♪♪ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord ♪♪ Hosanna in the highest ♪ Holy are you and blessed is your son Jesus Christ. By the baptism of his suffering, death and resurrection, you gave birth to your church. You delivered us from slavery to sin and death. And made a new covenant with us by water and the spirit. On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples and said, "Take, eat, this is my body given for you." "Do this is remembrance of me." And when the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples and said, "Drink from this all of you, this is my blood "of the new covenant, poured out for you "and many for the forgiveness of sins." "Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me." And so in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith. (organ music playing) ♪ Christ has died ♪♪ Christ has risen ♪♪ Christ will come again ♪

- Pour out your holy spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world the body of Christ redeemed, transformed by his blood. By your spirit make us one with Christ. One with each other. And one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit and your holy church, all honor and glory is yours almighty God now and forever. (organ music playing) ♪ Amen ♪♪ Amen ♪♪ Amen ♪ And now with the confidence of children we pray as our Lord has taught: 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 forever. Amen. We, though many that we are, become one for this one loaf for

which we all partake. When we break the bread is it not a means of sharing in the body of Christ? When we give thanks over the cup, is it not a means of sharing in the blood of Christ? Come to the Lord's table. (organ music playing) (organ music playing) (organ music playing) (choir singing communion hymn) (choir singing communion hymn) (choir singing communion hymn) (choir singing communion hymn) (choir singing communion hymn) (organ music playing) (organ music playing) (choir singing communion hymn) (choir singing communion hymn) (choir singing communion hymn) (choir singing communion hymn) (choir singing communion hymn) (choir singing communion hymn) (choir singing communion hymn) (organ music playing)

- Please stand. Bountiful God, we give thanks that you have refreshed us at your table. Strengthen our faith. Increase our love for one another and send us forth into the world in courage and peace. Rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (organ music playing) (choir singing recessional hymn) (choir singing recessional hymn) (choir singing recessional hymn) (choir singing recessional hymn) (choir singing recessional hymn)

- The grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be with you and abide with you now and always. (choir singing) (choir singing)