

(choir singing)

- Sometimes we get so caught up in our humanity and what that means that we forget that breath of life, that gift of yourself which you have given each of us. In our self centeredness we forget that you are our creator and sustainer. Forgive us, Lord, and bring to us a realization of what being created in your image means in our lives. Then give us the strength and the courage to live out that realization.

- Lord, God, we bring our outdated and our outgrown ideas of who you are and how you are related to us. Forgive us for thinking and acting without reference to you most of the time, and for obscuring the liberating word from you in Christ Jesus much of the time. Stir up the gifts of your spirit in us so we can be your people bringing truly liberating words and actions and relationships to bear on our world.

- All these prayers of penitence we lift to thee, oh God, asking that in thy love thou wouldst forgive us, for we know that it is thy faithfulness that saves us even when we are unfaithful. Grant us a renewed spirit that we might serve thee and those whom thou has given us to love, through Christ our Lord, amen. (organ music)
(choir singing)

- Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Jesus said the one who comes to me I will not cast out. Your sins are forgiven for Christ sake, amen. (organ music) (choir singing)

- Hear the word of God as proclaimed by his prophet Isaiah from the 52nd chapter of the Book of Isaiah beginning with the 13th verse. Behold, my servant shall prosper. He shall be exulted and lifted up and shall be very high. As many were astonished at him, his appearance was so marred beyond human sacrifice and his form beyond that of the sons of men, so shall he startle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they shall see. And that which they have not heard, they shall understand.

- Let us join together in the reading of the Gospel lesson by standing to hear the Word. The Gospel lesson comes to us from Mark the 10th chapter, the 35th to the 45th verses. Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask you to do." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit one at your right hand and one at your left in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. You are able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized." And they said to him, "You are. We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup I drink you will drink. And with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized. But to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them and their great men exercise

authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. For whoever would be greatest among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the son of man also came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many." May God add blessing of the Holy Spirit to the reading of this word, amen. (organ music) ♪ Glory be to the Father. ♪ ♪ And to the Son. ♪ ♪ And to the Holy Ghost. ♪ ♪ As it was in the beginning. ♪ ♪ Is now, and ever shall be. ♪ ♪ World without end. ♪ ♪ Amen, amen. ♪

- Now would you join with me in affirming our faith? The Litany of Affirmation which is printed in your bulletins. As a worshipping community, are we the church?

- Yes, you are the church called to hear the word of God and respond in faith. We believe in one God maker and ruler of all things, infinite in wisdom, power and love, whose mercy is over all creation and whose will is ever directed to the good of all people. This God is our God and we affirm with joy the creative power which comes from this relationship. We believe in Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, mediator of grace and hope, reconciler of our broken relationships.

- This Lord is our Lord and we affirm with joy God's gift of abundant life in Christ.

- We believe in the Holy Spirit, God present in our lives who convicts us of sin, assures us of God's love, and empowers us with gifts.

- The Spirit is in us, and we affirm with joy God's active presence in our lives.

- We believe that this faith should manifest itself in a love that serves. For Christ came into the world, not to be served, but to serve.

- We affirm with joy that God compels us to go into the world as servants to the end that the kingdom of God may come upon the Earth.

- The Lord be with you.

- And with your spirit.

- Let us pray.

- Oh, God, in this holy season of Lent, in this time of spring when the flowers bud and bloom, the birds sing, the sun grows warm, the wind enlivens us, the rain refreshes us. When hearts seem tender, words sound kinder, feelings are warmer, and thoughts more lively, when Spring comes with all that this means to each of us and to those whom we love. We rejoice in life and we celebrate the new life you offer each of us. Oh, God, in this time of trouble, tension, and trauma, let us hear Jesus say to each of us, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you." In this time when we carry burdens, when life is heavy and the weight makes us weary, let us hear Jesus say, "Come unto me all who labor and who are heavy laden, and I give you rest." In

this time when we are shackled in our doubts, imprisoned by uncertainty and insecurity, let us hear Jesus say, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." In this time when many roads rise up before us, when choices are unclear and confusion surrounds us, let us hear Jesus say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." In this time of indifference, selfishness, and unconcern for others, let us hear Jesus say, "I was hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, lonely, imprisoned, a stranger, and you cared for me. Enter in to the joy of Heaven." In this time of hardness of heart, insensitivity of spirit and callousness of feeling, let us hear Jesus say to each of us the first commandment is love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. Looking unto Jesus the Christ as the redeemer and the giver of life, give us the grace, oh God, to love ourselves, others, and you so that we might rejoice in life and celebrate the new life you offer each of us. In the name and through the power of Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Hear us oh God as we pray the prayer which he has taught all of his disciples to pray.

- 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're pleased this morning to have with us a number of persons who are here at Duke University and Duke Divinity School this weekend participating in the inter seminary conference on women in ministry. So that those of you who worship here regularly might be aware of who some of these persons are, and also perhaps be impressed more than you have been before with the number of women who are in ministry, I'd like to have each of those persons, the men and the women who are participating in this conference wherever you are in the congregation this morning to stand for just a moment, please. Thank you. It is also our privileged to have, as our guest preacher in the Duke Chapel today Dr. Letty Russell, who also is here as a participant and as the keynotes speaker for the Inter seminary Conference on Women in Ministry. Dr. Russell graduated from Wellesley College, Harvard Divinity School, and Union Theological Seminary, served for a number of years in the parish and worked for 17 years, I think she informed me just a few minutes ago, in the East Harlem Protestant Parish, one of the most significant ministries in the life of the church in this century. She now is a professor of religious studies at Manhattan College in New York, also teaching at Yale Divinity School and New York Theological Seminary. We welcome Dr. Letty Russell to Duke University to Duke Chapel, to this service of worship. And we hear the word of God which you bring to us.

- Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in God's sight. In the name of the creator, liberator, and reconciler, amen. In my undergraduate days at Wellesley College, I used to process down the aisle with the choir daily and on Sunday. Not quite such a long aisle, and I usually was wearing blue jeans under my robe, but nevertheless as I processed down the aisle I came to the chancel and I looked up and there in the chancel written across the wall were the words Non Ministrari sed Ministrare. Each time I looked at those words walking down the aisle, no matter how sleepy or bleary eyed or distracted, I believed, believed that this lifestyle of Jesus, not to be ministered unto but to minister, had something to do with my own lifestyle, and in fact with why I was at college. Today the words not to be served but to serve, although in modern English, are still with us. But, for all of us, I think, they've become harder to believe. They have become more of a problem than a possibility in our lives. They are a problem for Christians because the very word service has become so debased in our culture that most people think

of it, at best, as a sort of bandaid approach to helping others. And at worst, they view it as a cop out from working for a just society. Service is a problem for women, blacks, and other third world groups because service is identified with subordination, powerlessness, oppression. It is a problem for ministers and laity because we have created a class of professional ministers who serve in structures which deprive the whole people of God of their own responsible servant hood in ministry. Yet, here are the words. They don't go away. Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that those that are supposed to rule over the gentiles lorded over them and their great men exercised authority over them, but it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all for the son of man also came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many." I guess I could add that the words are also a problem for bishops, district superintendents and a few other people. And here are the words, and not only the words, but the lifestyle of Jesus of Nazareth which we think so deeply on during the period of Lent as we talk about following him to the cross. The lifestyle of one who came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for the world. This impossible idea of service is in fact the only possibility for those who want to follow Jesus. This seemingly impossible role of service is possible for us all because it is not just a command, a law of God. Rather, it is a gift of God, a gracious gift which makes it possible. Just think of it. This God of the Hebrew Christian tradition is like no other gods. God is the one who chooses to serve, not just to be worshiped and adored. Other gods have been revealed so that women and men could serve them, but this God, the God of the suffering servant, the God of Jesus Christ begins from the other end, begins with us, with us. God comes to the people to liberate them, to serve them, so that they may celebrate their freedom by sharing it with others. In God's service we see what Karl Barth calls The Humanity of God. God is first of all not a king sitting on a pyramid of the world creating other pyramids of domination and subjugation in hierarchies of church and society. Rather the humanity of God is seen in that God chooses to be related to human beings through service. No wonder our passage from Isaiah 52 says the servant of Yahweh will startle the nations. His appearance was so marred beyond human semblance. His form beyond that of the sons of men. So shall he startle the nations. Kings will shut up, will shut their mouths because of him. The servant cannot even be recognized because suffering service is not even expected of a messianic figure by those in high places. Service then is God's gift because it is God who serves. Service is also God's gift because Jesus not only calls his disciples to serve, but also provides the power and the possibility of carrying out this service. In Jesus Christ we have the representation of new humanity, the beginning of a new type of human being whose life is lived for others. Jesus came to be Emmanuel, God with us. To be with all people, the women as well as the men, the ignorant as well as the learning, the outcasts as well as the religiously acceptable, the oppressed as well as the oppressors. And it is Jesus who helps us to see the humanity of God so that we, too, can become representatives of new humanity. Here we see what it means to be truly and newly human. This is the image of God, the freedom to serve others. This is the image into which humanity is created and redeemed, to be together with others. The whole story of the New Testament revolves around this one theme, diakonia, service. At last, someone has come, not to be served but to serve. Everything that was done by this son of God including humiliation, self emptying, cross, death, is summarized in one final communique, service. This communique is offered as a gift and a promise. The disciples of Jesus are called to be servants to risk their lives in being liberated for others. God's intention for us now is just such an impossible possibility. Through service, God's and ours, we are liberated to be full human beings, persons. First we are liberated for ministry, diakonia. We are set free from hierarchical structures which place ministry in the hands of a few to begin carrying out the work of the

people. Traditionally, diakonia has taken three forms in the Christian tradition, curative diakonia, preventative diakonia, and proscriptive. Curative diakonia is one which we are very familiar with. It is the healing and the helping of victims in the society. Preventative diakonia is attempting to curtail the developments of social ills which victimize human life, and prospective diakonia is attempting to open up the situation for free realization and actualization of human life. Although in the past the church, and especially women, have specialized in individual curative or bandaid tasks, recently people have become aware that it is necessary to work together on preventative programs for health and social welfare, and the church is also slowly becoming involved in prospective programs in which the society itself is so changed that people can take part in shaping their own destiny and that the evils such as war, poverty, racism, and sexism are attacked at their root so that a new image of humanity can flow. If we think about it, this last kind of diakonia, prospective, is what we want for our own life. We do not want to be helped after we've been crushed. We would much rather have justice that leads to the elimination of the destructive social structures that might and do crush people. This is why women want not only to have a say in the way that they prepare themselves to take their place of service in the church and society, but also to change the society and the church itself so that their place may become one of full humanity and partnership. They prefer to have a say in shaping their future rather than having to retreat into what is called the feminine mystique only to have to begin again about age 40 trying to find out what their lives are all about. They are pushing for prospective diakonia. In being liberated for ministry, we are drawn into the struggle of liberation for all peoples, men and women, black and white, rich and poor, seek to move together toward new ways of life in which those who have been oppressed are free to form their own agenda and to participate in shaping their own future, deciding whom and how they want to serve. We are not only liberated for ministry, but secondly we are liberated for others because we are called to be God's helpers and co servants with the God who serves. This, after all, is the image of woman in Genesis Two. She is created by God as Ezer, a divine helper for a man who needs to live and work in community. Just like the image of the Ebed Yahweh, servant of God in Isaiah 52. The woman and also man is seen as a human being who has been given the privilege of living for others as God's representative. This service in no way implies subordination. Nor does it imply domination of any human being over another. The alternative to subordination is not domination. The authentic alternative is service. There is no true ministry which is not freely given in the same way that God's ministry is freely given to us. Social and church structures in which domination is used to make others serve are a denial of freedom. Just as subordination is a denial of true human dignity. As long as forms of slavery and oppression exist in our society as seen in our own communities and lives, and in such recent television documentaries as *The Autobiography of Jane Pittman*, *The Migrants*, the story *We the Women*, the rest of us sensing these forms of oppression cannot be free, for liberation is a universal, and not just an individual commodity. We are liberated not only for service and for others, but also for God because we experience the love and service of God in our own lives. When confronted by the authorities, Acts tells us that the apostle Peter stood up there in front of everybody and boldly proclaimed, "We must obey God rather than men." For the Gospel claims our allegiance to the one who serves beyond any human ideology, beyond any church or social structure. Such a demand is not easy. It often makes us very unreliable in a cause, unable to assert that, in fact, any particular program, any particular organization is of ultimate significance. Because Christians seek to live according to the new way of being a human they often find themselves as marginal and misfit people in the games of dominance and exploitation that people play. In fact, as Christians, if we are not somewhat feeling that we are misfits, then we need to have another look at how and where we're

serving. Perhaps the women who are the most misfits are those who belong to the Roman Catholic, the Eastern Orthodox, and the Episcopal Churches. The vote at Louisville last Fall, against the ordination of those 26 deacons waiting for full confirmation of their personhood and of their calling by the Holy Spirit was extremely painful to them. To be voted a non person is no fun. But all of us, everyone of us here, are part of their problem, and those of us who are concerned with the way certain people are defined as less human are called to challenge these and our own hierarchies which perpetuate dehumanization and injustice in whatever form. We must obey God rather than men or women. In the last few years, many women have been discovering that they really are misfits and marginal to the male dominated society in which they live. Some are seeking new ways to go on being misfits for the sake of the society. They are working in community with others on the boundaries of institutions where they can try to create new structures and new lifestyles for human living. My own experience is that I've always been a misfit. Before I thought I was a misfit because I was just odd. But now I'm glad to find other women and men who feel as I do, those who are seeking not just to be part of things as they are, but to serve the process of change toward God's intended future. Not to be served, but to serve. These words so impossibly possible as a gift of God are an instant communique of who we are and where we are going as followers of Christ and as representatives of an emerging new humanity in which there is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female. Long ago, as I glibly and naively read those words circling the chancel of my college chapel, not to be ministered unto, but to minister in those days, I didn't know how tough service would be. I just assumed that was what I was supposed to do. I didn't know just how much that promise of Jesus meant. As the text in Mark said, "I tried to share his baptism and his temptations and sure enough I often ended up with the wrong answers and worse defeats." And I have to confess to you this morning that I still don't know how much that promise means. But I do know that in spite of all the devaluation and misuse and betrayal of the word service in churches and society, these words of Jesus continue to lead us toward a life of freedom. These words are about a revolution in which everyone wins, in which everyone finds a way of service and partnership on the road to human freedom, amen. May God add the blessing of the Holy Spirit to this reading and speaking of the word, amen. (background announcement)

- Response to the word. Oh, Lord our God, we come before you at this time with grateful hearts for the word which has been proclaimed in our hearing on this day. We praise you for the liberation of all people and the equality of all men which has been accomplished already in you, and we ask that you would fit us for our role of servant hood in accomplishing Thy purposes on Earth.

- Oh God, help us to become, to become what you intend for us to become, to do what you intend us to do. Help us to set your purpose at the forefront of our minds. Help us to sense your presence. We ask you to be with us. We are yours. We are not our own. We give thanks in the name of Jesus Christ who was your humble servant until death on the cross, amen.

- God, you alone are whole. We need your help in becoming whole persons. Help us to see each other not just in female, male roles, but as persons, your children. Direct our lives so that we may become not conformed to our culture, but one in Jesus Christ and heirs to his kingdom and promise of service.

- Oh God, it is so very hard for us to even want to serve, to be a servant means we have to take risks and

make commitments we don't want to take or make. Yet Christ has risked all for us in his life and on the cross he declared that your love would indeed overcome all of our pain and our hurt and our sufferings and the awareness that the Resurrection was accomplished and is a possibility of liberation for us. Help us to accept and affirm your love for us and for all people to the end that we might be willing to learn to love because you first loved us. In the name of Jesus Christ, our servant lord and savior, amen.

- Oh Lord, we lift these prayers and all of the silent prayers of our hearts unto thee and claim thy promise which was given to us in the scripture that whatsoever we ask in thy name shall be done. We ask all of these things in thy name. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, amen. (organ music) ♪ O sacred Head, now wounded. ♪ ♪ With grief and shame weighed down. ♪ ♪ Now scornfully surrounded. ♪ ♪ With thorns, thine only crown. ♪ ♪ How pale thou art with anguish. ♪ ♪ With sore abuse and scorn. ♪ ♪ How does that visage languish. ♪ ♪ Which once was bright as morn. ♪ ♪ What thou, my Lord, has suffered. ♪ ♪ Was all for sinners' gain. ♪ ♪ Mine, mine was the transgression. ♪ ♪ But thine the deadly pain. ♪ ♪ Lo, here I fall, my Savior. ♪ ♪ 'Tis I deserve thy place. ♪ ♪ Look on me with thy favor. ♪ ♪ Vouchsafe to me thy grace. ♪ ♪ What language shall I borrow. ♪ ♪ To thank thee, dearest friend. ♪ ♪ For this thy dying sorrow. ♪ ♪ Thy pity without end? ♪ ♪ O make me thine forever. ♪ ♪ And should I fainting be. ♪ ♪ Lord, let me never, never. ♪ ♪ Outlive my love for thee. ♪ ♪ Amen. ♪

- Be seated, please. Let us join together in the prayer of unison. We offer these small gifts, oh Lord, as a pledge of our commitment to your work and your church. Accept them as you accept us, partial and not whole, as promise and not yet fulfillment, amen. (organ music) (choir singing) (organ music) ♪ Praise God from whom all blessings flow. ♪ ♪ Praise Him, all creatures here below. ♪ ♪ Praise Him above the Heavenly host. ♪ ♪ Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. ♪ ♪ Amen. ♪ (organ music) (choir singing)

- And now, may the God who chose to become a servant in Jesus Christ abide in your hearts and minds and give you the strength and courage to find your own servant hood and to live following the example of Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen. ♪ Amen. ♪ (bells ringing) (organ music)