

(upbeat music) (peppy music) ♪ Beautiful Savior ♪ ♪ Lord of all nations ♪ ♪ Son of God ♪ ♪ And Son of man ♪ ♪  
Glory and honor ♪ ♪ Grace adoration ♪ ♪ Now and forever ♪ ♪ More be Thine ♪ ♪ Now and forever ♪ ♪ More be  
Thine ♪ (upbeat music) (lyrics drowned out by organ)

- As a forgiven people, we recognize that it is only the love of God that can save us and not we ourselves. Therefore, let us confess our sins to Almighty God that we may be reconciled unto our Maker who redeems and sustains us. Please be seated. 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. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. Amen.

- As minister to the university, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this baccalaureate service. And also to welcome back to the pulpit of Duke Chapel, our guest preacher, the Reverend Dr. Peter Gomes, minister to Memorial Church and Plummer professor at Harvard University. We are pleased to have him back today and we welcome him.

- Let us pray. Open our hearts and minds, oh God, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, so that as 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 Acts. But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, unless you are circumcised according to custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and with Barnabas. And they sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, with the following letter. The brethren, both the apostles and the elders, to the brethren who are the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting. Since we have heard that some persons from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things. That you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what is strangled, and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. This ends the reading of the first lesson. (serene music) (lyrics drowned out by the music)

- The congregation will please rise for the reading of the Gospel. The Gospel lesson is taken from St. John. Jesus answered him, if a man loves Me, he will keep My Word. And my Father will love him. And We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me, does not keep my Words. And the Word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to you remembrance. All that I have said to you, peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled. Neither let them be afraid. You heard Me say to you, I go away, and I will come to you. If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now, I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you may believe. This ends the reading of the Gospel. (upbeat music) (lyrics drowned out by music)

- The Epistle is written in the 16th chapter of St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, beginning at the first verse. Now, concerning the contribution for the saints, as I directed the church of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me. I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may speed me on my journey wherever I go. For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you if the Lord permits. But, I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a wide door for effective work has opened to me and there are many adversaries. When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord as I am. So, let no one despise him. Speed him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brethren. Here ends the reading from the Epistle. Let us pray. Help us, Lord, to become masters of ourselves, that we may become the servants of others. Take our hands and work through them. Take our minds and think through them. Take our lips and speak through them. And take our hearts and set them on fire. For Christ's sake, amen. I take as my text the ninth verse from this chapter from 1 Corinthians, which you have just heard these words of the apostle Paul. For a wide door for effective work has opened to me and there are many adversaries. For hundreds of years, the old have assembled the young before them, very much in scenes like this. And the old have inflicted upon the young, such as you are, one last bit of unsolicited advice. This is the season of the year when that ritual takes place across the land with painful regularity and frequency. The formula for the advice that we give to you is something like this; the world is in terrible shape, but you can handle it. Or, the world is in very good shape and you're very lucky to be going out into it. Or, the world is in terrible shape, and so are you. (audience laughing) Now, given this advice, with it's mixed signals, is it no wonder that many students, perhaps some of you, have initiated demands for some sort of student tenure. It was George Plimpton, who in a class day speech at Harvard some years ago, put this sentiment very clearly when addressing the seniors about to depart. George Plimpton said to them, I have just one word of advice to you seniors, who are about to go out into the world; don't go. (audience laughing) It's hell out there. But you must go. You've hired these robes, you've got to go. Your parents can't afford to keep you here any longer. (audience laughing and clapping) Duke University cannot afford to have you around any longer, because now you all know too much. You see, the university is really in the business of ignorance, not of knowledge. That is why when you know too much, you are

graduated, given a degree, certified, and sent away like Adam and Eve, expelled or graduated from the Garden of Eden. They were expelled not because they were stupid, but because they knew too much, and not for their own good. (audience laughing) The preachers task on an occasion such as this is to try to make sense of this expulsion, to attempt a sorting out. Both to speed you on your way, to get you out of here as quickly as possible with all decency. And to do so without imposing too much upon your good time, your good humor, or your good sense. I take this task seriously, for I have a healthy regard for what transpires here at Duke. I take this task seriously because I care for the world into which you are now about to enter. And I take this task seriously because I have high hope and confidence in you, in your character, in your mind, and in your souls. It would be an easy temptation to use this sermon and this occasion as an opportunity to compliment you all on all of those skills and abilities that have sustained you here in your days at Duke. But you already know how clever you are, how attractive you are, how bright you are. You know, better than I, how hard you have worked. Some, to make the system work for you. Others of you, to avoid all work at all. Not a few of you are here today solely by the grace of God. (audience laughing) You, more than most, should attend all three of these baccalaureate services. But the task before us is just that, it is before us out there. It will not do to rehearse the past, no matter how glorious or how difficult it was. It is not the point to try to recall back the days that have been. We are now called to celebrate the moment before the next. As Adam said to Eve on the eve of their first commencement, my dear, we live in an age of transition.