

- Good Friday service, Duke Chapel, April 13th, 1979. (organ music)

- Would you please rise. Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the tree. Died to sin and lived to righteousness. Blessed and praised be God, our redeemer, who has so loved us and our world, whose only son was sent into our midst to make us children of God and heirs to the promise of life everlasting. The Lord be with you. (organ music) All mighty God, on the cross we see the pain and sorrow which we have inflicted upon you and upon one another. We confess that we have strayed from your ways. We have broken your commandments, we have betrayed your love through our disordered and self-centered lives. Lord have mercy upon us so that we might be lifted up and drawn to you in order to live in righteousness and service. Hear these comfortable words from the scriptures. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. In the name of Jesus Christ. (organ music)

- From the gospel of Luke, and when they came to the place, which is called the skull, there they crucified him. And the criminals, one on the right, and one on the left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, "for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by, watching. But the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others, let him save himself, "if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One." The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him vinegar and saying, "if you are the king of the Jews save yourself." There was also an inscription over him, this is the king of the Jews. One of the criminals who was hanged, railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? "Save yourself, and us." But the other rebuked him, saying "Do you not fear God, "since you are under the same sentence of condemnation, "and we, indeed, justly. "For we are receiving the due reward of our deeds. "But this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come "in your kingly power. And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, "today, you will be with me in Paradise." It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land, until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into thy hands, I commit my spirit." And having said this, he breathed his last. (singing of hymns) On this day, we contemplate the Cross. It stands out as our most difficult moment of the Christian year. We aren't quite sure how we're supposed to feel. It doesn't seem like a good day. We want Easter to come, so that we can sense victory, instead of the seeming defeat of the cross. A crucified Messiah, is still somewhat a stumbling block to our sense of the world. We want our savior to act like a savior, to be in control of things. We're used to great drama, powerful speeches, stirring events. But a cross? It was an ugly death, the most vicious of Roman executions. We can't make it fit neatly into our religious and cultural practices. It ruffles our pride in humanity. A savior hanging on a piece of wood, outside of the city, is not our kind of glory. It's not our style. Yes, we recognize the significance of pain, suffering. But, too often, we trivialize the cross. We think that we have found the right way to feel about pitying the poor Jesus, who ran into the wrong crowd. He could have avoided it, we think, if he had only been more careful about his method. Every time I watch one of the movies of Jesus' life, such as NBC's Jesus of Nazareth, I always find myself wanting Jesus to do it all differently. I want him to amaze the Jewish council. I want him to dazzle Pontius Pilate. I want him to really

defend himself. Be persuasive, Jesus. Show them your stuff. But it always turns out the same. The march to Cavalry and the Crucifixion strike a blow of my sense of how to influence people. And then I realize, we want Jesus to be approved of by the council, because we want our fellow Christians to tell us how nice we are. We want Pilate to think he was okay, because we know that power comes about when you know the right people. We want the angry mob to cheer for Jesus instead of for Barabbus, because we want to be accepted by our peers. Crucifixion doesn't fit like resurrection does. It seems like defeat. And defeat is a way that we would not choose. But God's way is a different way than our way. Only by contemplating the cross, do we recognize that the message of Christ has not been our way. The same forces which worked to bring about his death, are forces which we participate in. In a sense, we may crucify him daily. We may be the least of God's people, if we are so bound by our culture, our political and commercial arrangements, and even our very own religious traditions. These were the same forces which brought about Jesus' death. But this was the only way in which we could see God's fundamental principle of love in its fullest expression. For God so loved the world, that the son was given. The cross brings judgment upon us, because it forces us to realize that we do not always live by the standard of love. And in this realization, there lies our salvation. Our pride, our motives, our designs tend towards self-affirmation at the expense of others. Christ has died for our sins, not because he has struck some sort of bargain with God. But in suffering as God-incarnate, he has brought about our own redemption. Our redemption lies in our acceptance of the love of God, reaching out to us from the cross. And making that love our basis for living. In giving of ourselves, as Christ has given himself for us, we live the abundant life of which he taught. Our contemplation of the cross forces us to realize that our hope does not lie with ourselves, but in God who endured the very destruction which we create for ourselves. The late Reinhold Niebuhr wrote that, "If God is love, "rather than power, it follows that he gains his victories "by pain, rather than by force." We call this Good Friday because of the redemptive work which God has done in Christ, through the cross. The verse from Luke tells us that Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into thy hands "I commit my spirit." As we accept the redemption and freedom which the cross offers to us, let us cry out, oh loving God, "into thy hands, we commit our spirits, Amen. (singing of hymns)

- For almost 2000 years, the cross has been the chief symbol of Christians. But about the first three centuries of the early Christian church, the cross was not used as a public symbol. And there are two reasons for that. First, by non-Christians, the cross was looked upon as a very degrading death, even by the Christians themselves. And secondly, the cross was such a symbol of the vigor and the growth of Christianity in those days, that it was desecrated very often by non-Christians. But privately, and theologically, and liturgically, the cross has always been the premiere symbol of Christianity. And it was natural and logical that the instrument of our salvation, should become an object of special veneration. It is clear that devotion to the cross, beginning with the epistles of Paul, who mentions it many, many times, was not chiefly concentrated on the negative aspects of the death of the cross, of mere physical suffering, and pain, and death, but uppermost in the mind of the Christian mentality, from the very beginning, was the cross' saving role in the divine plan of God, our Father. And it's Christ, through his passion, was a triumphant victor over death and sin, so the cross, the means of suffering, became the source of life. And thus, it was looked upon as the throne and the standard of the king of glory. And so at Christ's moment of apparent greatest defeat, he attained his greatest victory. Now the ceremony, the Veneration of the Cross, it is a really ancient one. During the veneration, the readers will be reading the lamentations, which comes from an old Greek liturgy

from the Eastern Church. And at the end of the lamentations, they will be reading a translation of the Pange Lingua, a very ancient Latin hymn from the Western Rite. And I think this symbolizes the unity of all Christians. No matter where we are, we are one. We are one in Christ Jesus, our Lord. At the Veneration of the Cross, when they hold the cross down at the bottom of the steps, some may care to remain in their pews, and quietly contemplate the death and victory of Christ. Others may care to come forward, and venerate it, in any way that their conscience dictates. Please feel free to do what you think is best.

- We worship you, Lord. We venerate your cross. We pray to your resurrection. Through the cross, you brought joy to the world.

- May God be gracious and bless us. And let his face shed his light upon us.

- We worship you, Lord. We venerate your cross. We praise your resurrection. Through the cross, you brought joy to the world. My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.

- I led you out of Egypt, from slavery to freedom. But you led your savior to the cross.

- My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.

- Holy is God.

- Holy and strong.

- Holy, immortal one, have mercy on us.

- For 40 years, I led you safely through the desert. I fed you with manna from heaven, and brought you to the land of plenty. But you led your savior to the cross.

- Holy is God.

- Holy and strong.

- Holy, immortal one, have mercy on us.

- What more could I have done for you? I planted you as my fairest wine, but you yielded only bitterness. When I was thirsty, you gave me vinegar to drink. And you pierced my side with a lancet.

- Holy is God.

- Holy and strong.

- Holy, immortal one, have mercy on us. For your sake, I scourged your captors and their first-born sons. But

you brought your scourges down upon me.

- My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.

- I led you from slavery to freedom. And drowned your captors in the sea. But you handed me over to your high priests.

- My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.

- I opened the sea before you, but you opened my side with a spear.

- My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.

- I led you on your way, in a pillar of cloud, but you led me to Pilate's court.

- My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.

- I bore you up with manna in the desert, but you struck me down and scourged me.

- My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.

- I gave you saving water from the rock, but you gave me gall and vinegar to drink.

- My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.

- For you, I struck down the kings of Canaan, but you struck my hand with a wreath.

- My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.

- I gave you a royal scepter, but you gave me a crown of thorns.

- My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.

- I raised you to the height of majesty, but you raised me high on the cross.

- My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.

- Sing my tongue, the savior's glory. Tell his triumph far and wide. Tell all the famous story of his body, crucified, how upon the cross, the victim, vanquishing in death, died.

- Eating of a tree, forbidden, man had sunk in sanken snare, When our pitying creator did a second tree prepare. Destined, many ages later, that first evil to repair.

- Such the order God appointed, when for sin he would atone. To the serpent, thus supposing schemes yet deeper than his own. Thence the remedy for curing, when the fatal wound had come.
- So when now, at length, the fullness of the sacred time drew near, then the son, the world's creator, left his father's throne, on high. From a virgin's womb appearing, clothed in our mortality.
- All within a lowly manger, low a tender baby lies, seeing his gentle virgin mother, lull to sleep his infant cries while the limbs of God incarnate, round with swathes of band she ties.
- Thus did Christ to perfect manhood, in our mortal flesh attain. Then of his free choice he goeth, to a death of bitter pain. And as a lamb, upon the altar of the cross, for us, is slain.
- Low, with gall, his thirst, he quenches. See the thorns upon his brow. Nails his tender flesh arrending. See his side is opened now, whence to cleanse the whole creation, streams of blood and water flow.
- Lofty tree, bend down thy branches to embrace thy sacred load. Oh, relax the native tension of that all too rigid wood. Gently, gently, bear the members of thy dying king and God.
- Tree which solely was found worthy to world's great victim to sustain. Harbor from the raging tempest, art that saved the world again. Tree with sacred blood anointed, of the lamb, for sinners slain.
- Blessing, honor, everlasting, to the immortal deity. To the father, son and spirit, equal praises ever be. Glory to the earth and heaven, to trinity and unity, amen.
- We worship you, Lord. We venerate your cross. We praise your resurrection. Through the cross, you brought joy to the world.
- May God be gracious and bless us. And let his face shed light upon us.
- We worship you, Lord. We venerate your cross. We praise your resurrection. Through the cross, you brought joy to the world. My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.
- I led you forth out of Egypt, from slavery to freedom. You led your savior to the cross.
- My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.
- Holy is God.
- Holy and strong.
- Holy immortal one, have mercy on us.

- For 40 years, I led you safely through the desert, I fed you with manna from heaven, and brought you to the land of plenty. But you led your savior to the cross.

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- Holy is God.

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- Blessed be the lord by day. Blessed be the lord by night. Blessed be lord when we lie down. Blessed be the lord when we rise up, for in thine hand our the souls of the living and the dead. And whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all flesh? Into thy hand, I trust thy spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, oh lord, God of truth. Oh God, reveal unto us thy oneness. And establish thy kingdom and reign over us, forever, amen, Please rise to receive the benediction. And now, may the lord send down blessings upon us. People who have recalled the death of his son in the surety and hope of the resurrection. And may God grant us pardon and bring us comfort. May our faith grow stronger, and our salvation be assured, in the name of God, creator, son and holy spirit, amen.