

(lively organ music)

- Good morning. Welcome to this service of worship on the 18th Sunday after Pentecost. To remind you of the annual service for thanksgiving of God's creation and blessing of animals at 2 p.m. today in front of the chapel. Also call your attention to the opening hymn, which is a favorite hymn here in Duke Chapel, and the special treatment of the hymn as it's printed in the bulletin. We're glad that you're here, and let us continue our worship. Please join me in the greeting. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- The risen Christ is with us.

Congregation: Praise to you, oh Lord.

- Please stand. (lively organ music) ♪ All creatures of our God and King ♪ ♪ Lift up your voice and with us sing ♪ ♪ Oh praise Him ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Thou brother sun with golden beam ♪ ♪ Thou sister moon with softer gleam ♪ ♪ Oh praise Him ♪ ♪ Oh praise Him ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Oh brother wind, air, clouds, and rain ♪ ♪ By which all creatures ye sustain ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Thou rising morn in praise rejoice ♪ ♪ Ye lights of evening find a voice ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Oh sister water flowing clear ♪ ♪ Make music for thy Lord to hear ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Oh brother fire who lights the night ♪ ♪ Providing warmth enhancing sight ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Dear mother Earth who day by day ♪ ♪ Unfoldest blessings on our way ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ The flowers and fruits that in thee grow ♪ ♪ Let them God's glory also show ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ All ye who are of tender heart ♪ ♪ Forgiving others take your part ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Ye who long pain and sorrow bear ♪ ♪ Praise God and on Him cast your care ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ And thou our sister gentle death ♪ ♪ Waiting to hush our latest breath ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Thou leadest home the child of God ♪ ♪ And Christ our Lord the way has trod ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Let all things their Creator bless ♪ ♪ And worship Him in humbleness ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Praise the Father, praise the Son ♪ ♪ And praise the Spirit Three in One ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Oh praise ye ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪

- Almighty and everlasting God, You are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve. Pour upon us the abundance of Your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever, Amen.

- Let us pray. Open our hearts and minds, oh God.

All: 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 reading comes from the Book of Numbers. Hear the Word of the Lord. The Lord said to Moses, "Go up this mountain of the Abarim Range, "and see the land that I have given through the Israelites. "When you have seen it, "you also shall be gathered to your people "as your brother Aaron was. "Because you rebelled against my word "in the wilderness of Zin, "when the congregation quarreled with me. "You did not show my holiness "before their eyes at the waters. "Moses spoke to the Lord saying, "Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, "appoint someone over the congregation "who shall go out before them "and come in before them, "who shall lead them out and bring them in, "so that the congregation of the Lord "may not be like sheep without a shepherd. "So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua, son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, "and lay your hand upon him. "Have him stand before Eleazar the priest "and all the congregation, "and commission him in their sight. "You shall give him some of your authority, "so that all the congregation of the Israelites may obey. "But he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, "who shall inquire for him "by the decision of the Urim before the Lord. "At his word, they shall go out. "And at his word, they shall come in, "both he and all the Israelites with him, "the whole congregation." "So Moses did as the Lord commanded him. "He took Joshua and had him stand "before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation. "He laid his hands on him and commissioned him "as the Lord had directed through Moses." This is the Word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

- Please stand as we join in singing responsively Psalm 81 found on page 803 in your hymnal. (lively organ music) ♪ Sing aloud to God our strength ♪ ♪ Shout for joy to the God of Jacob ♪ (congregation singing) ♪ Blow the trumpet at thy new moon ♪ ♪ At the full moon of thy feast day ♪ (congregation singing) ♪ I hear a voice I do not know ♪ (congregation singing) ♪ In distress you called ♪ ♪ And I delivered you ♪ ♪ I answered you in the secret place of thunder ♪ ♪ I tested you at the waters of Meribah ♪ (congregation singing) ♪ There shall be no strange God among you ♪ ♪ You shall not bow down to a foreign God ♪ (congregation singing) ♪ All glory to be to you, oh God ♪ ♪ And to Jesus Christ our Savior ♪ (congregation singing) ♪ As it was since time began ♪ (congregation singing)

- The second reading comes from Paul's letter to the Philippians. "Not that I have already obtained this "or have already reached the goal "but I press on to make it my own "because Christ Jesus has made me his own. "Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it "my own but this one thing I do, "forgetting what lies behind "and straining forward "to what lies ahead "I press on toward the goal "for the prize of the heavenly call "of God in Christ Jesus. "Let those of us then who are mature "be of the same mind. "And if you think differently "about anything, this too God will reveal to you. "Only let us hold fast to what we have attained. "Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me "and observe those who live according "to the example you have in us "for many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. "I've often told you of them "and now I tell you even with tears, "therein is destruction, "their god is the belly "and their glory is in their shame, "their minds are set on earthly things "but our citizenship is in heaven "and it is from there that we are expecting a savior,

"the Lord Jesus Christ. "He will transform the body of our humiliation "that it may be conformed to the body of his glory "by the power that also enables him "to make all things subject to himself. "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, "whom I love and long for, "my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord "in this way, my beloved." This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

- This reading comes from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. "Listen to another parable. "There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, "put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it "and built a watchtower. "Then he leased it to tenants "and went to another country. "When the harvest time had come, "he sent his slaves to the tenants "to collect his produce "but the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, "killed another and stoned another. "Again, he sent other slaves, "more than the first "and they treated them in the same way. "Finally, he sent his son to them saying, "they will respect my son. "But when the tenants saw the son, "they said to themselves, "this is the heir, come, let us kill him "and get his inheritance. "So, they seized him, "threw him out of the vineyard "and killed him. "Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, "what will he do to those tenants? "They said to him, he will put those righteous "to a miserable death "and lease the vineyard to other tenants "who will give him the produce at the harvest time. "Jesus said to them, "have you never read in the scriptures "the stone that the builder rejected "has become the cornerstone? "This was the Lord's doing "and it is amazing in our eyes. "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God "will be taken away from you "and given to a people "that produces the fruit of the kingdom." This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God. (tranquil organic music) (choir singing)

- This seminarian made an appointment with me and asked me if I would take him on for an independent study. "What do you want to study? "Preaching," he said. "I want to do an independent study course "with you in preaching." "Well, what do you wanna learn about preaching?" I ask. "I wanna learn to preach like you preach," he said. "Well, that's ridiculous," I said. "You can't imitate me. "for one thing, you're from Iowa "and to preach like I preach, you've gotta be born somewhere "between Greenville and Maldon. "Pronounce the word O-I-L. And he said, "Oil." And I said, "There you have it. "You're supposed to pronounce that word 'oil' "like motor oil, as distinguished from you all." (laughing) "You can't preach like I preach. "Besides, I don't want you to be my disciple. "I don't want you to imitate me." Reflecting on that conversation, I realized my reluctance had less to do with modesty, a virtue with which I am not overly endowed, but it had to do with my discomfort in having this young person looking over my shoulder. Patterning his way after my way. I don't want that kind of responsibility. Besides, I could be doing it wrong and I don't want to see my mistakes reflected back in the life of somebody else. Those of you who are teachers know what I mean. And thus we come to a collision with today's epistle. Saint Paul, in one of his more unguarded moments, in writing to the Philippians, he says, "Be imitators of me. "You have a worthy example in us." And this was no slip of the tongue. He gives exactly the same advice to the Galatians, the Thessalonians, the Corinthians. "Become as I am," Paul says, "You have an example in us." Is there no limit to apostolic presumption? In the text, we would like to know who these enemies of the cross are whose god is their belly. Who's Paul talking about there? Sensualist, their god is their belly. It sounds like a description of the inhabitants of fraternity row! Their god is their belly. Who are these people? Well, we don't know. But we do know that something in

their lifestyle bothered Paul. And what we do know is that Paul quite unashamedly offered his life as counter to theirs. "Join in imitating me." Can you picture this? I'm beginning a class, first class of the new semester and I say, "Now class, this is a course in homiletics "and the goal of this course "and that you will be graded is, "I want you to all join in imitating me." What is this? It's one thing to be in a course where all the assigned readings are texts written by the professor. But really, this is too much. The height of conceit, "imitate me." No, no. What I say is, "Class, during this semester I'm going to lay out a few principles for you, a few interesting ideas (though none of them my own), some insights for discussion, and then I want you to make up your own mind. You see, I respect your identity, your individuality. I don't wanna force myself on you, I'm not like Paul, for heaven's sakes. That's what I'll say, and I'll tell you that I do that because I'm appropriately self-effacing, and modest, and respectful of your personal freedom. Translated into plain English, this means I wanna get through this class without taking responsibility for you. My goal is to trot you through this university in such a fashion that you'll be as much a stranger to me on the day of your graduation as in when we first met. We live in a lonely society based upon the Constitution. The Constitution which created the individual, an entity unknown until the 18th century, the Enlightenment. The individual who is described as this bundle of individual rights and individual claims. Our society puts more stress on individual freedom and individual rights than any other the world has known. And unfortunately there's a byproduct of that. It's called loneliness. A society which believes that individual rights and prerogatives are more important than community. My society gives me maximum room to exercise my rights-- but it doesn't tell me which rights are worth exercising. I'm given maximum space for my freedom but it doesn't give me anything interesting to do with my freedom. And in a church or university, corrupted by such a society, everyone becomes a stranger. Oh, I say that I want community but would I want to pay the price and the relinquishment of my individual space? And so, most of us say, "Look, "you stay out of my life, "I'll stay out of yours." A few years ago, one of the biggest gripes of our students was the lack of enforcement of the noise policy. Students demanded that somebody be hired to go into the dorms and tell offenders to turn their stereos down. And there was this dean, this naive dean who asked, "Well, gosh, why don't you simply walk next door "and you knock on the door "and you say, hey, would you turn your stereo down? "It's bothering people." Hey, look, that's not my business. I mean, if I walk next door and tell somebody something like that, he might criticize something that I'm doing, and then where would we be? And I'm not picking on students. At a faculty retreat a few years ago, one of my colleagues asked, "Does it bother any of us "that some of our students are sexually promiscuous? "That some of them are indulging "in self-destructive behavior "and addictive practices?" "Well," we said, "we've got to respect their privacy. "They're adults, we're not their mothers." Translated into honest English, we meant, God forbid that we should hold our students accountable not only for what they know but for who they are because if we did that, you know what might happen? Students might turn on us and hold us accountable, speak the truth about our lifestyle and personal habits and inconsistencies and then where would we be? You see, the students have joined in imitating us faculty. I'll tell you, the Office of Student Affairs is asking for it. Telling students it's not good for their academics to be drunk Friday through Sunday. You tell students a thing like that, they may turn on us faculty and ask what we're doing Friday through Sunday. Then where would we be? You criticize some students for being unprepared in class on Monday, and next thing you know, that student'll be challenging us for being unprepared in class on Wednesday. Then where would we be? I'll tell you. On our way to the rediscovery of the etymology of the word college: college, a collection of colleagues with common purpose. A Duke senior recently returned from a year at Oxford told me that his regret was that in his four years here,

he had sort of drifted through the place, taking a little of this and a little of that. Not really engaged. And that nobody on the faculty had gotten to know him well enough to know when he was faking it. He envied the moral tutor tradition at Oxford. Education at its deepest is a form of imitation. Paul, in appealing to his flock for imitation placed himself squarely within that moral and pedagogical tradition which assumed that a teacher is somebody willing to expose, who's willing to be exposed, to the imitative glare of students which asserted that the purpose of learning is imitation of a master, which believed that teachers have a responsibility to live as they teach, to walk as they speak. And that pupils are challenged not only to know a bunch of things, but to be transformed by someone. In the European Enlightenment, with the creation of the individual, morality was recreated into something allegedly available to anybody. Anybody, it was said, could be good by simply thinking clearly, using Kantian reason, common sense, or other individualistic natural endowments. And these were alleged to reside in just everybody, democratically bestowed regardless of that person's upbringing or your parents or social status. And that view of morality is counter to that offered by ancient moralists like Aristotle. Aristotle, who taught that goodness is not a matter of being reasonable, not a matter of deciding what to do in this particular isolated situation, but rather goodness is a matter of being a good person, being somebody who's been trained to be good. You gotta be taught to be good, said Aristotle. And Aristotle's chief analogy for morality was learning how to ride a horse. You can't learn to ride a horse by reading a book. You learn to ride a horse by watching somebody do it who knows how. By being led step by step, by imitating the moves, by being coaxed into it and criticized and guided by this person until you get the feel of the reins, until it becomes yours. Here was an unabashedly elitist view of morality. Aristotle, unlike Kant, believed that morality was something that is not available to everybody by natural endowment. Morality means to belong to that aristocracy who has taken the time and the trouble to become better persons than we would have been if we'd been left to our own devices. Goodness is much more than a matter of knowing good. It's a matter of being good, of learning the moves and the skills which morality requires. On a less exulted plain, Martin Luther said, you don't get apples from a thorn bush, you get apples from an apple tree, you get good works from a good person. But away with Aristotle and back to Jesus. For Jesus, being good was not an intellectual problem, of knowing what ought I to do in this particular situation. Ethics in our day. As was sometimes said in the church in which I grew up, you can't talk the talk if you don't walk the walk. Jesus unabashedly asked not just for agreement, he demanded discipleship: learning the moves, walking the walk, following him down this narrow path. Jesus asked for imitation. He wanted followers, not admirers. Martin Luther King just didn't admire Gandhi, he imitated Gandhi. For this little band of Christians at the church of Philippi, constantly in danger of seduction by the pagan majority, there was no better textbook than the lives of those who bear the burden of leadership. Lifestyle is best converted through lifestyle and there is just no weaseling out of the plain truth that discipleship is utterly dependent on our being able to identify examples, saints, people worthy of emulation and if we Christians can't point to a few examples, even to ourselves, we really have very little to say. If every 100 years or so we can't point to a Teresa of Calcutta or a Desmond Tutu, we Christians have got a big problem. Because the world is quite right in judging our religion by the kind of lives it's able to produce. Lacking changed lives, we pervert the Gospel into an intellectual dilemma, a head trip rather than a lifestyle trip. But being a Christian is a matter of following somebody who's headed somewhere that I would not have gone if I had been left to my own devices. In my last church, I preached this sermon and it was a sermon about poverty and the plight of the poor and I used this example, I got this example, it was out of the a Brazilian newspaper, someone had sent it to me about a man named Walter. Walter in Brazil. In

Brazil there is an active market of poor people selling organs from their bodies to richer people. And the story told about how this man named Walter had just sold both of his eyes, Walter had never had a job, he'd never been able to feed his family adequately and Walter had sold his eyes for \$20,000. And I just told this story in the sermon. And then we stood and sung a hymn and went home and had lunch. 8:30 the next morning, I was walking into my office, phone was ringing, it was Debbie on the phone. Debbie. Her husband was a young professor at a nearby college. They lived in a modest home in a modest part of town. Debbie said to me over the phone, "I've hardly been able to sleep a wink last night." I said, "Oh why, what was wrong?" She said, "I couldn't get Walter out of my mind. "I got my husband up, 5:30 this morning, "we sat down, we looked at our lives. "We'd been thinking about getting a new car. "We don't need a new car, we can repair the old car. "We've been thinking about buying a new stereo, "we don't need to buy a new stereo. "I just wanted to call you and tell you "we have decided to double "what we're giving to the church "if you can assure us that some of that money "might go to help somebody like Walter." And I thought to myself, gee, I slept like a baby last night. Conversations like that will make preachers despise laypeople. (laughter) So, go ahead, imitate me, demand that my miserable little life be a worthy example. Would you do me a favor? Don't let me off the discipleship hook. Insist that I teach by the way I walk rather than merely by the book. Insist that there be an congruency between what I preach and the way I practice. Imitate me. The bread was broken and the wine was poured for communion and I stretched out my hands over the communion table for the prayer of thanksgiving and down on the front row, a little girl was heard to comment, "Look, mommy, he's trying to look like Jesus." It's not an inappropriate thing to say about a Christian. (tranquil organ music) (congregation singing)

- The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Let us pray. Our kind and gracious God, you hear our prayers before we speak and answer before we know our need. Though we cannot pray, may your spirit pray in us, drawing us to you and toward our neighbors on Earth. We pray for the church of Jesus Christ that begun, maintained and nurtured by your spirit. It may be true to its calling doing your will. Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear Our Prayer.

- We pray for the whole creation, may all things work together for good until by your design your children inherit the Earth and order it wisely. Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

- We pray for people who do not believe, who feel hopeless beyond any human consolation, who have no examples to inspire them to dream dreams. Open their eyes to see beyond the brokenness of our world, the wonders of your love displayed in Jesus of Nazareth and to answer when he calls them. Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

- We pray for all schools, colleges and universities for those who teach and those who learn. Bestow your wisdom in such measure that relationships of mutual caring and trust may thrive and that the pursuit of truth may lead them to greater community. Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

- We pray for enemies as Christ commanded. For those who oppose us or scheme against us, who are also children of your love. Shield us from infectious hate or desire for vengeance. Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

- We pray for the sick as they suffer from pain or despair, or struggle with demons of the mind as they cry out for healing. May they be patient and trusting, open to your healing presence. Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

- We pray for those who govern our country, who make, administer or judge our laws. May new bridges of understanding and mutual forbearance enable a greater vision of peace and justice for all to flourish in our land. Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

- All these things and whatever else you see that we need, grant us, oh God for the sake of him who died and rose again. And now lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit. One God forever. Amen. As a forgiven and reconciled people, let us offer our gifts and ourselves unto God. (tranquil organ music) (congregation singing) (lively organ music) (congregation singing) ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ (congregation singing) ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪

- Oh Lord our God, we thank you for the many examples along our journey who have formed us into the people we are. For loving parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles who embraced us as tiny strangers to become family, for committed teachers, tireless coaches and wise counselors who saw the best in us when we could only see the worst. For modern-day heroes and heroines, both well known and unsung as well as all the saints throughout the ages who inspire us to follow in their footsteps. Most of all we thank you for Jesus Christ, the ultimate example and embodiment of divine love who emptied himself in obedience to you and now reigns in glory with you forever and forever and in whose name we pray.

All: 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, the power and the glory forever.

- Amen. May the God of peace make you holy in every way and keep your whole being, spirit, soul and body free from every fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ♪ Amen ♪ (lively organ music) (congregation singing) (lively organ music) ♪ Go in peace ♪ ♪ And serve the Lord ♪ ♪ Beloved of Christ, amen ♪ (tranquil organ music)