

- Duke University Chapel service of worship, February 19th, 1978. (instrumental music) (indistinct singing)

- Let us pray. Grant us Oh God, your grace that seeing ourselves in the light of your holiness, we may be cleansed of the pride and vainglory which obscure your truth. And knowing that from you know secrets are hid, we may perceive and confront those deceits and disguises by which we deceive ourselves and our brothers and sisters. So may we worship you in spirit and in truth, let us continue our pray. From vagueness of purpose and a weak and wavering wheel. From confusion patience within different, cowardice with common sense. From dislike of criticism and love of popularity, disdain for the poor and confidence in wealth and all other kinds of adultery. That we may love you and our neighbor and serve you in our work. Hear our pray Oh Lord, that we should hear your word. Amen. Dear people of God believe the good news which has come to us down through the ages, through the Christian community. God is always waiting to forgive us, except this forgiveness. Let us give thanks for God is good and God's love is everlasting. Thanks be to God who forgives us. Thanks be to God whose tender mercy heals us. Thanks be to God who's abundant grace sustains us. Greetings to you and welcome in the name of Jesus Christ. Please note, Mr. Eley Westdale will speak this Wednesday, February the 22nd at 4:30 PM and Page Auditorium. This is the final address in the series of the Holocaust and Jewish Christian understanding. Those of you who have heard Mr. Westdale or have read his books, know what a very special privilege this is for us to have him on campus. We invite you to join us for this last lecture. You have responded so well to the Roosevelt Halls, families, tragic loss of their home and their possessions. When all was destroyed by fire, and it contributed clothes and furniture. And through this community have given \$1,130, and this is good, but their need is still great. Checks made payable to Duke Chapel and marked for the Hall family will help them restore the home which they had built themselves. We look forward to the presentation of Bernstein's Mays, beginning this Easter Sunday night under the direction of Ben Smith and continuing Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings. The page box office will be open immediately after this service for your convenience to get a ticket for this performance. Having a student preach has become an important tradition in Duke Chapel. The committee had so many good sermons submitted that they have recommended to the worship committee that they seriously consider inviting students to preach at least once a semester. I Al we welcome you to this pulpit and listen to the word you bring to us with open hearts and minds.

- Let us pray. Prepare our hearts Oh Lord, to accept your word, silence in us any voice, but your own, that hearing we may also obey your will through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen. The Old Testament lesson is from the 20th chapter of Jeremiah verses seven through 13, "Oh Lord, Thou hast deceived me and I was deceived. Thou hast stronger than I, and thou hast prevailed. I have become a laughing stock all the day. Everyone mocks me, for whenever I speak I cry out. I shout violence and destruction for the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. If I say, I will not mention him or speak anymore in his name, there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones and I am weary with holding it in and I cannot. For I hear many whispering, terror is on every side, denounce him, let us denounce him, say all my familiar friends watching for my fall. Perhaps he will be deceived, then we can overcome him and take our revenge on him. But the Lord is with me as a dread warrior. Therefore my persecutors will stumble. They will

not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten. Oh Lord of hosts who tries the righteous, who see us the heart and the mind, let me see the vengeance upon them for today have I committed my cause. Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord, for he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evil doers," here ends the reading from the Old Testament, Amen. (instrumental music) (indistinct singing) Will the congregation stand for the reading of the gospel lesson. (clears throat) The lesson is from the 10th chapter of Matthew verses 34 through 39. Listen for the word of God. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword for I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law and a man's foes will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it and he who loses his life for my sake will find it." Here ends the reading from the gospel. Our power and glory be to God, Amen. (instrumental music) (indistinct singing) "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. He who finds his life will lose it and he who loses his life for my sake will find it." Let us pray. Teach us thy way Oh Lord, and help me to speak from my heart and not only from my mind. For we make our prayer in the spirit of your revealing truth, Amen. The sermon is entitled "Born to Lose," that's because this sermon is about losing. It's not about winning, not about achieving or succeeding, but about losing. Let me say before I go any farther that, I think most of us in this chapel appropriately the architectural symbol of excellence do not know how to lose. Most of us find it very difficult to lose. And if we have lost it all, then the pain that we have felt from that drives us very, very far away from the experience. I want to first tell you why I think we in particular find it hard to lose. If you're a student out in in this chapel, you'll probably find it hard to lose because you're used to being the top dog in your school probably. You're used to being successful, used to people looking to you as responsible and successful people. You've been leaders in most everything you've attempted and you have succeeded and won many of the things you have have tried. If you're a professor here, you're probably near the top of your field. And if you aren't at the top of your you're probably trying to get there. Academic standards have ingrained excellence in your skin and publish or perish has kept it in your blood. Let's face it. You survive in your field by achieving, by maintaining excellence. You survive by winning, not by losing. And the rest of you, don't tell me that you didn't come to this worship service because, partly you expect excellence in music, excellence in liturgy, and sometimes the best in preaching. And for the rest of you who have perhaps darken the doors for the first time of this chapel or any other chapel. And if you're hiding behind the pillars and you're saying, Oh none of those classifications fit me. Well, I'd like to say, just by living in America, you are used to winning and not losing. And that if you don't think you have one yet, you know that you would like to try to win and winning is very much a part of your life. In America it's survival of the fittest. It's rugged individualism, it's competition and to the victor go the spoils. This is the land of opportunity where you either win or you lose. Now winning in and of itself is not all that bad. I'm not here to condemn you for winning. I think we should feel very good about the things that we have accomplished and succeeded with. I don't want you to rip out the organ in the back and I don't want you to start singing Jesus loves me for the Anthem. And I don't think we need to take away the academic standards of this university. All that I'm trying to say is that because we are so used to winning, it's very difficult for us to lose. We don't really know how to lose. In fact, we don't really want to admit that it's a part of our lives, but losing is in fact a part of our lives. Everyone here at one time or another has lost something in their lives. Be it a game, for relationship,

perhaps a reputation or innocence. You can't become an adult without losing your childhood. And you can't gain knowledge without losing some ignorance. And we cannot become closer without losing some distance. Every one of us has lost. And every one of us knows the pain of that losing. Therefore, the question is not whether or not we're going to lose. That's not the question today. The question is, what kind of relationship are we going to have with losing? There are at least three ways that we all too often deal with losing. First, we minimize our loss by minimizing our investment. I've noticed that if I watch a professional football game on TV, and if I don't know the two teams very well, if I don't pick a side and it's not very enjoyable, I'll probably go to sleep before the games over. To make it more enjoyable for me, I pick a team and fortunately I always picked the underdog and the underdog always loses. But the whole point of that is, that only by investing yourself in one side or the other do you have any kind of sense of belonging and any kind of sense of the thrill of victory or the agony of defeat? Some of us are so afraid of losing, that we never take a hold of anything that we might lose. In other words, we refuse to care. We refuse to allow anyone or anything to become important enough to us that by losing it, that would cause us pain. How many people walk this campus alone because they're afraid of losing? How many of you can count the number of people that are important to you on your index finger? Because you're afraid that someday you might lose them. And how many of you are afraid to tell someone you love them for fear that your words might be lost on deaf ears. There's no doubt about it, losing is frightening, but not caring for fear that we might lose is like not living because we might die. Another way of dealing with loss is to refuse to claim our loss. In other words, just don't let go, hold tight to the people you care about. Squeeze the life out of them, smother them with your love. Don't let them go because they may never return. How many mothers do you know like that? They can't let go of their children. How many husbands hold tight to their wives and refuse to let them be what they want and need to become? How often do we smother people with our expectations and our worn out stereotypes. Love is like a handful of powdered gold. The harder you grasp, the less you can hold. Takes a lot of faith to open your hand and allow yourself the risk of losing what you hold. Imagine holding a bird in your hand for that you care very much about. You could say, well, faith is opening your hand and letting the bird fly away, believing that it will return. That's not faith. We just tied a string to the tail of the bird and we'll let it fly over the horizon but we have that string there waiting, hoping that it will return. Now faith is opening your hand and letting the bird fly away and believing that we will survive without it. That there's something beautiful about an open hand, about a bird in flight. It takes a lot of faith to lose. Faith is letting go and living with the loss. We're afraid to let go because we're afraid that we won't survive the pain. A third way that we all too often deal with losing is to refuse to admit the pain. I work as a chaplain in the hospital and I see so many people every day that long to share the agony of their loss, perhaps of a terminal illness, perhaps of an arm or a leg or perhaps of a relationship. But they deny the pain and they say, "Oh, I'm okay, I'm fine and everything is gonna be okay." I think particularly of a couple that I was with that an elderly couple, the wife was dying of cancer. And whenever the two of them were in the room, they would laugh and talk about the weather and everything else that didn't concern them. And then when one would leave the room, when the husband would leave the room and I'd be sitting there with the wife, she would just break down in tears and the agony of the loss that she was going to experience. And then I'd go out in the hall and I'd stand with the husband and he would cry and weep and just snort the air, because he was about to lose his wife. Why can't we hold each other and feel the agony of our loss together? You see, we refuse to lose ourselves. We refuse to let go of ourselves. I'm very much in control of my life. Very responsible, fairly intelligent. I'm willing and I'm able. When I'm those things, I know what to expect in life, I know how things

will happen, but I'm afraid to let go of the control I have in my life. I don't know what will happen when I'm not responsible and when I'm not intelligent, when I'm not willing and able, I don't know what will happen to me when I'm irresponsible. When I'm out of control. Why if I let go of myself, somebody just might come up and put their arm around me and hold me and turn me into a gurgling baby. I can't let that happen to me. No, you can't survive in this world as a baby, you've got to be a man, you've got to be strong and rough and tough. And I don't care what Jesus said to Nicodemus about being born again and I don't know. He said something to the disciples about you can't enter the kingdom heaven without becoming a child. That doesn't make any sense to me. I've got to be a man, don't come to near. So I construct a mask and that mask never frowns, never gets angry, never shed a tear. I really take it off, just like I rarely take off my shoes when there's company in my house. I know underneath my feet stink. I know what my face looks like underneath that mask. And I'm afraid of I take off the mask like when I take off my shoes, the people will all leave me. So I hang on to that mask. There's a line in one of Ingmar Bergman's films that goes something like this. I wish I had a pin when I was watching the movie. It's something like this, it says, "We are all people standing in a dark room, afraid to cry out, for fear there is no one there to answer." Can you imagine being in this chapel if it were completely black and you couldn't even see your hand in front of you, and you hurt and you wanted to cry out but you were afraid you were alone and that no one would hear you. And even if they heard you, and even if someone was there, they might not come. Isn't that what we're like behind our mask? We're afraid that if we cry out no one will come, that indeed no one may even be there. So we walked around in darkness, never touching a soul, never being held. You see, it takes a lot of faith to lose yourself. There is absolutely no guarantee that anyone will find you, you can only trust. When Jesus gathered his disciples together to speak the words that we read this morning. I think he had pretty well gotten fed up with the way we run scared in life. He certainly did not promise any kind of rose garden for anybody, because the great prince of peace said, "I did not come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." He wasn't calling his disciples to go out and build the largest cathedral in the world. He was not calling his disciples to go out and build the largest bus army that had ever been created. He didn't want them to build the mightiest in the grandest of nations. He merely wanted them to carry a lowly cross, to become servants, to love, to dare to risk the pain of losing. Clearly, he believed that there can be no loving without losing. If we want to follow his call and learn to love, we must be willing to lose ourselves and something of that which we love. CS Lewis writes in his book "The Four Loves." "To love it all is to be vulnerable. Love anything in your heart will certainly be wrong and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully around with hobbies and little luxuries, avoid all entanglements, lock it up safe in your casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The only place where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love, is hell." I'm convinced that God did not want us to be alone. We were born to be in community. And since we can only build community by taking off our masks and daring to lose the all-important distance we have placed between ourselves. I am convinced that we were in a very real sense, born to lose. Clearly our fears of losing keep us separated and alone. Losing is a part of life, but somehow we have been fooled. We've been fooled by the lie that winning is the only way to fulfillment and to happiness. Jesus said, "If you find your life, if you choose only to win, only to cling to all that you have won, then in fact, you will find that you have lost the very thing you see." However, if you dare to lose your life for his sake, in other words, if you dare to risk losing by giving of yourself, you will find that in the midst of losing there's a new sense of victory.

When I graduate in May, and leave here at the end of that month, I will be leaving behind me four of the most beautiful years of my life. I've been an RA here for that's the resident advisor here for those four years. And I've grown attached to a lot of the students here. And in a very real sense, this university has become my home and my family. When I leave here, I will experience a very great loss. It will not be easy. There will be a lot of pain. Well, if you leave this place after four years and it doesn't hurt you, you've missed a very great opportunity. If you have nothing to lose when you leave here, then you have gained nothing. Look at yourself, ask yourself, are your fears of losing keeping you from caring and from being cared for? Is it keeping you from living? If so, it's not too late. There are a few more months left if you're a senior, if you're a freshmen, glory hallelujah, you got four years to go. If you find your life, you will lose it, but if you lose your life for his sake, you will find it. I'd like to close by reading, a few excerpts from "The Little Prince." It's a children's book but I really think it was written for adults. It's about a little prince that has a lot of adventures on a planet. And where we come into this story, he's very sad and he feels very alone. It was then that the Fox appeared, "Good mornings," said the Fox. "Good morning," the little prince responded politely. Although when he turned around he saw nothing. "I'm right here," the voice said "Under the apple tree." "Who are you?" asked the little prince and added, "You're very pretty to look at." "I'm a Fox," the Fox said. "Come and play with me," proposed the little prince. "I'm so unhappy." "I can not play with you," the Fox said, "I'm not tamed." "Ah, please, excuse me," said the little prince. But after some thoughts he added, "What does that mean, tame?" "It's an act too often neglected," said the Fox, "It means to establish ties." "To establish ties?" "Just that," said the Fox. "To me you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a 100,000 other little boys. And I have no need of you and you and your part have no need of me, to you I am nothing more than a Fox, like a 100,000 other Foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me you will be unique in all the world, to you I will be unique in all the world. My life is very monotonous," he said, "I hunt chickens, men hunt me. All the chickens are just alike and all the men are just alike. And in consequence, I am a little bored, but if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know this sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me like music out of my borough. And then look, you see the green fields down yonder, I do not eat bread, wheat is of no use to me. The wheat fields have nothing to say to me and that is sad. But you have hair that as the color of gold, think how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me, the grain which is also golden, will bring me back to the thought of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind and the wheat." The Fox gaze set the little prince for a long time. "Please tame me," he said, "I want to very much," the little replied, "But I have not much time. I have friends to discover and a great many things to understand." "One only understands the things that one tames," said the Fox. "Men have no more time to understand anything. They buy things already made at the shops, but there is no shop anywhere where one can buy friendship. And so men have no friends anymore. If you want a friend tame me." So the little prince tamed the Fox and when the hour of his departure during the year, said the Fox, "I shall cry." "It's your own fault" said the little prince. "I never wished you any sort of harm, but you wanted me to tame you." "Yes that's so," said the Fox. "But now you're gonna go and cry?" said the little prince, "Yes, that is so," said the Fox. "Than it has done you no good at all." "It has done me good," said the Fox, "Because of the color of the wheat fields." Jesus calls us to be tamed and to tame each other, to risk the agony of losing all because of the color of the wheat fields, Amen. (instrumental music) (indistinct singing)

- Let us affirm what we believe. We believe in God who has created and is creating, who has come and the

truly human Jesus to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the spirit. We trust God who calls us to be the church to celebrate life and its fullness, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus crucified and risen, our judge and our hope in life and death in life beyond death, God is with us, we are not alone. Thanks be to God. The Lord be with you. Let us pray. Oh, Holy God, we lift to you this day, this world which you have created and love. Have mercy on your creation, so torn by terror and fear, so fractured and divided. Hear our praise Oh God, for those who work to bring together your people separated by great chasms of ideology, of mistrust, of misunderstanding, of conflicting values and goals. May we all learn to live together Oh God, with good health and happiness, in peace and in physical wellbeing. We pray, oh God, for those persons who are in positions of power in our government, in our labor, in our industry, in our university, in our church, that they may be dedicated to serve you and the spirit in which Jesus serve, willing to lose, that all may gain. We pray for those persons who seek opportunity to bring changes in our family life, our community life, and our world, that they may know when to be patient and when to be impatient, and be guided by love and the search for justice. And hear our prayer so loving God, for those who are in pain, those who are ill and body or mind, those who are separated from the ones they love. Those who have no one to love. Those who feel betrayed. Those who cannot find physical needs for themselves and their families, that they may find fulfillment and peace. Hear our prayers for those who are frightened because of the fear of the unknown, which they are facing, because of the uncertainty of their future, because of the impossible task which are before them, calm their spirits so they may be hopeful and wise and serene. And we pray for our ourselves Oh God, tend to our deepest needs which cry out to you. We pray that our consciences may be stirred by your word. And our anxieties quieted by your love. Hears now is we pray the prayer of our Lord. 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 thy is the king and the power and the glory forever, Amen. (instrumental music) (indistinct singing) We do praise you, Oh God, for the joys of living, for the privilege of sharing in your service. And so we give to your work this offering, which symbolizes our lives, which we dedicate to you again this day. Yes we pray all of us to heal the broken hearted, to feed the hungry, to care for the sick, to be responsible to you and all we do, we pray in the spirit of Jesus, our Christ, Amen. (instrumental music) (indistinct singing) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you this day and forever more. (indistinct singing)