

(organ music)

- Grace and peace to you from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And a warm welcome to this service of worship on the third Sunday following Pentecost. Please take note of the various announcements contained in today's bulletin. Especially the information pertaining to next weekend and the reunion of the Duke chapel choir. Special music will be performed during the Sunday morning service and on Saturday afternoon at three pm a special performance of Handel's Messiah will be offered. Once again, this Sunday the service is being televised to patients in Duke medical center through the generosity of the Duke hospital. We offer a special welcome to these individuals and to those, who worship with us through the radio audience. Our preacher this morning is the reverend John Wall, the chaplain to Roman Catholic students at the university. A priest of the diocese of Raleigh, Father Wall took over the Newman center campus ministry three years ago and has been instrumental in making the ministry one of the most active and vital on campus. We welcome Father Wall to the pulpit today and look forward with eagerness to the message he brings. Now, let us continue with our worship of almighty God. (choir singing) (organ music) (choir singing) (organ music) (choir singing) Let us pray. Oh God, who has prepared for those, who love you such good things, that they pass human understanding. Pour into our hearts such love toward you, that we loving you above all things may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.

- 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 the book of Ezekiel. Thus says the Lord God, I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one and myself will plant it upon a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it. That it may bring forth bows and bear fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell all kinds of beasts, in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. And all the trees of the field shall know, that I, the Lord, being low the high tree and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I, the Lord, have spoken and I will do it. This ends the reading of the first lesson.

- Will you stand and join me in reading responsibly song number 46, number 570 in the back of hymnals. God is our refuge and strength. Therefore we will not fear, that the earth should change. Though it's warders roar and foam. There is a city, who's streams make glad the city of God. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved. The nation's rage, the kingdom's totter. The Lord of host is with us. Come, behold the works of the Lord. He makes wars seize to the end of the earth. Be still and know, that I am God. The Lord of host is with us. (organ music) (choir singing)

- The second lesson is take from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. So we are always of good courage, we know, that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So

whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil according to what he has done in the body. This ends the reading of the second lesson. (choir singing)

- The following is a reading from the holy gospel according to Mark. Jesus said to the crowd this is how it is with the reign of God. A person scatters seed on the ground, they go to bed and get up the day after, and day after that. And through it all, the seed sprouts and grows without their knowing how it happens. The soil produces of itself first the blade, then the ear, finally the ripe wheat in the ear. When the crop is ready, they wield a sickle for the time is ripe for the harvest. Jesus went on to say, what comparison shall we use for the reign of God? What image will help to present it? It is like mustard seed, which when planted in the soil is the smallest of all the earth's seeds. Yet once it is sown, springs up to the largest of shrubs. With branches big enough for the birds of the sky to build nests in its shade. By means of many such parables, Jesus taught them the message in a way, that they could understand. To them, he spoke only by way of parable while he kept explaining things privately to his disciples. This is the gospel, the good news of the Lord. It's a distinct joy for me to be with you this morning. Although as Catholic chaplain at Duke I've conducted many services here in this chapel, this is my first opportunity to mount these steps and preach at the 11 o'clock service on Sunday. Whenever I think of preaching in a church as large as this, with its beauty and its size, I'm reminded of one of the preachers of years gone by over in Europe, Lagardere, who preached in many of the cathedrals of Europe. With such magnificent words, they inspired all those, who gathered and people would line up to hear him. Story has it, and I think it's a bit exaggerated, that on one Sunday he spoke of Noah and the flood. His words were so strong and convincing and people had the flood presented to them so vividly, that they starting standing on the pews to keep their feet from getting wet. I promise you, this morning I'm not going to talk about the flood. Years ago, Lagardere had magnificent churches of Europe, today we're gathered in this magnificent church in America. This church, that symbolized the temple of God, namely his presence among us. Here we are gathered from across the nation and from other nations as well. Our music, our readings, our voices, all proclaim, that God is not only in his heaven, but here in our midst and that we are truly his people, his family. Today's readings from Ezekiel, Paul to the Corinthians and the gospel according to Mark challenge us to ponder the reign of God, the kingdom of God. But where is this kingdom of God? As children, we often think of anything, that is truly good as coming. I remember my days as young North Carolinian from Greensborough vacationing with my grandmother in Wisconsin. The fourth of July was coming. There would be fireworks, a parade, cotton candy and all that would be good. I recall mowing a yard knowing, that soon I would have a dollar in my pocket and I could go to the local A&W root beer stand and that would be good. I know there are people here this morning, who yesterday thought, that tomorrow, being Sunday, they would be in Duke chapel and they thought of the marvelous, magnificent organ, listening to a most professional choir and that would be good. But now, that we are here, we're thinking of the events of the afternoon: a delightful brunch, visits with friends, a drive to the lake and that would be good. We always seem to be looking for the good as coming, as over there, as beyond. And often we fail to see and relish, and experience the good as being here and now. The readings of today's service tell us God is always with us, that God is here, now, present and active among us, continually alive. We do not need to only talk of heaven as coming, but the kingdom of God is actually in our midst. If only we have the faith and take the time to look for it. In short, our heaven has already begun and will be realized more fully later. Those of us, who have been so gifted by God with the light of faith and have allowed ourselves to see God,

the Father, to recognize the Son and be filled with the Spirit, through baptism, have received a new life. Jesus says, I have come, that you may have life and have it more abundantly. This new life, the presence of the divine, is not only where we one day wish to be, but it is where we are now, by faith and love, in union with the trinity and one another. But you may say, yes, I've received that life in seed form, but it's only a seed and honestly I have not seen the growth in my life, nor have I experienced it personally in the lives of others. I know it's there, but that seems about it. Recently I read the story of a handful of wheat, that was found by archeologists in a 5000 year old tomb of an ancient Egyptian monarch. You can well imagine how that huge tomb was built, by the back breaking labor, under the hot desert sun, all in an effort to make one's life immortal. Today hardly anyone knows the monarch's name, that was lost in the 5000 years of recorded history between the day of his burial and the present. Yet there was a sign of life that continued between then and now. The archeologists found, that some wheat seeds were found in the tomb, possibly placed there by a workman shortly before the tomb was closed. It was these seeds, that held a promise of life, however long the time, they simply waited patiently in secret for the right time, the right condition to release the life that was within them, yet dormant for some 5000 years. After the archeologists had planted them, at the right time, in the right place, they rooted themselves and pushed their way into the sunlight rewarding their trusting archeologist sowers with a harvest that was truly wonderful. The archeologists who planted the seeds showed their trust in a belief in the endurance of life. They didn't put those seemingly dead seeds in a museum, rather they planted them and allowed them to grow. The same kind of faith we see today in our first lesson from Ezekiel, the 17th chapter. Here, Ezekiel sees beyond the Babylonian exile to the return of his people to the land of Judah. In the fourth chapter of Mark we heard Jesus seeing a group of simple followers, whose faith in the kingdom of God would someday transform the world. That seed of their faith would grow to what we see here this morning, ourselves, gathered, proclaiming God's presence among us. Making his kingdom come in Durham, June 1988. The beauty of the kingdom of God is that it is so diverse. God's seedlings are not all the same, nor can they be perceived as acting in the same way. Let us listen again to the words of Jesus in the fourth chapter of Mark's gospel. What comparison can we use for the reign of God? What image will help to present it? It's like a mustard seed, which when planted in the soil is the smallest of all the earth's seeds, yet once it is sown, springs up to become the largest of the shrubs. With branches big enough for the birds of the air to build nests in its shade. For many of us baptism was the great sign of the beginning of our growth in faith. For many here this morning, that seed of faith has grown to the point where we have gained strength in crisis. It has shown itself as mature by our willingness to give ourselves in hours of service to family and neighbors and church. It has shown itself in our prayer life, that now overflows into action. Our faith life, the faith life of our community, has taken root and is coming alive like a plant coming to full stature. We can see it all around us here this morning. We can see it in the faces of those gathered. Teachers, engineers, secretaries, TV technicians, health professionals, the retired, all diligently working to build up the kingdom. Many of us would say, yes, Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev, they're trying to build a better world, but as for myself, I haven't thought of myself as doing just that, I don't perceive any change is coming from what I do. Listen again to the words of our blessed Lord in Mark's gospel. Now this is how it is with the reign of God. A person scatters seed on the ground and then goes off to bed, getting up day after day. And through it all, the seeds sprout without their knowing how it happens. The soil produces of itself first the blade, then the ear and finally the ripe wheat in the ear. The kingdom that you and I are building is often not that perceptible, but it is there and can be seen through faith. It is envisioned in the lives of your coworkers, families and friends, whose lives are different, because of the love,

that you have for them. It is in this world, that is becoming a better place, because you're concerned about social and ecological issues. It is slowly visible in your associates and family, who are beginning to mirror your values. For many of us today who are gathered here, this seed of faith has not grown to its potential, as we would like. It's like the wheat seed in the Egyptian monarch's tomb. It's been kept undercover, dark and hidden. Not exposed to the light of service, nor kept in an environment such as the church, where its roots can be nourished. It's been endangered by being exposed to a climate, that is lacking in true love. And has become placed in a very cold environment. A climate, that will surely hinder its growth. Yet, just as the case of the wheat seeds and the Egyptian tomb, there is nothing to prevent these seeds from growth in the proper place with the proper nourishment. The archeologists made the decision regarding the wheat. You and I, more than anyone else, will make the decision regarding the growth with God's help of our faith. How beautiful this day in Durham. How wonderful to be alive as a friend of mine says, in God's world. The rich diversity of nature continues acting out its inherent potential, grass, the flowers, the trees, the cool climate we experience this morning. The blue sky, all reflecting the rich diversity of the kingdom of earth. Look at the diversity of the seeds, that produce the rose, the lily and the red cedar tree. God allows each to come forth according to their nature. It is said that true artist do the same with the materials they work with. They don't impose themselves on their stone, or their ivory that they're working with, rather the true artist allows the inherent beauty of each to come forth alive from within itself, one might say. Michelangelo looked long and hard for the tremendous piece of Carrara marble, that he would be able to work with to produce the Pieta. It's almost as if the artist does not feel that the form has to be created, it was there from the beginning. Michelangelo summed it up in one of his famous sonnets. The best of artists has that thought alone which is contained within the marble shell. The sculptor's hand can only break the spell to free the figures slumbering in the stone. With God's grace, this faith of ours can grow to produce, as Jesus says, one of the largest shrubs. Truly then, we can become significant world leaders. We can become loving and forgiving parents. We can become those dedicated nurses and doctors, those business persons respected for their ethical standards and social responsibility. Yet, yes, let this environment we're experiencing today, the weather, this beautiful temple of God in which we are to find ourselves. The choir, the music, that all make our hearts and minds rejoice in saying, truly, the kingdom of God is here. And I'm building up that kingdom. Yes, Lord God, we truly say with Jesus, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (organ music) (choir music)

- The Lord be with you.

Audience: And also with you.

- Let us pray. Father, we are your children. Your spirit lives in us and we are in your spirit, hear us for it is your spirit, who speaks through us as we pray. Almighty God, you created the heavens and earth. Bless the produce of our land and the works of our hands. You created the human family in your own image, teach us to honor you in our brothers and sisters. Redeeming Lord, you inspired the prophets of old. Grant, that we, your church may faithfully proclaim your truth to the world. You sent your son into the world, reveal him to others through his life in us. Lord Jesus, for your sake, men and women forsook all and followed you. We pray, that you will call many to serve you in religious communities and in the ordained ministry of your church. You called men and women to be your disciples and each of us, Lord, deep in a sense of vocation.

And you prayed, that your church might be one and we pray, that you will unite all Christians, so that the world may believe you have sent us. You forgave the thief on the cross, we pray, that you will bring to all penitence and reconciliation. And you gave to us your peace. We pray, that you will bring the people of this world to live in true community and concord. You cured by your healing touch and word. We pray, that you will heal the sick and bless all, who minister to them. You were unjustly condemned by Pontius Pilate. We pray, that you will strengthen our brothers and sisters, who are suffering injustice and persecution. You have been glorified in the lives of countless saints, give us strength through their prayers to follow in their footsteps. Loving God, we know, that you are good and that you hear all those, who call upon you. Give to us and to each person what is best, so that we may glorify you through your son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the holy spirit, one God, now and forever, amen. With joyous and grateful hearts, let us now offer ourselves and our gifts to God. (organ music) (choir music) (organ music) (choir music) Almighty God, father of all mercies, we, your servants, to give you must humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us. We bless you for our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life. But above all, for the inestimable love and the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. We beseech you give us that du-sense of all your mercies, that our hearts may be truly thankful and that we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips but with our lives. To you be honor and glory now and forever, world without end and with the confidence of children we pray. Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on the earth, as it is in heaven and 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. (organ music) (choir singing) (organ music) And now go forth into the world to be seeds of God's kingdom alive and at work. And may the grace of our lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the encouragement of the holy spirit be with you now and always, amen. (choir singing) (organ music)