

(organ music)

Pastor: Good morning, and welcome to this service of worship here at Duke Chapel, on this sixth Sunday after Epiphany. Our guest lector today is the Reverend Carl Daw, who is a distinguished American hymn writer. We're singing three of Mr. Daw's compositions in our service today, and we're delighted to have him with us. He has been on-campus this weekend conducting workshops and speaking about new hymnody in the church. Remind you that at 5:00 this afternoon, our chapel organist, Dr. David Arcus, will give a free concert here in the chapel, which will include some of his own recently published works, and we invite you to be present for the concert this afternoon. Now let us stand for the greeting. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- The splendor of Christ shines upon us.

Congregation: Praise the Lord. (organ music) ♪ ♪ Ye watchers and ye holy ones, ♪ ♪ Bright seraphs, cherubim, and thrones, ♪ ♪ Raise the glad strain, Alleluia! ♪ ♪ Cry out, dominions, principedoms, powers, ♪ ♪ Virtues, archangels, angels' choirs, ♪ ♪ Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! ♪ ♪ Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! ♪ ♪ O higher than the cherubim, ♪ ♪ More glorious than the seraphim, ♪ ♪ Lead their praises, Alleluia! ♪ ♪ Thou Bearer of the eternal Word, ♪ ♪ Most gracious, magnify the Lord, ♪ ♪ Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! ♪ ♪ Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! ♪ ♪ Respond, ye souls in endless rest, ♪ ♪ Ye patriarchs and prophets blest, ♪ ♪ Alleluia! Alleluia! ♪ ♪ Ye holy Twelve, ye martyrs strong, ♪ ♪ All saints triumphant, raise the song, ♪ ♪ Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! ♪ ♪ O friend, in gladness let us sing, ♪ ♪ Supernal anthems echoing, ♪ ♪ Alleluia! Alleluia! ♪ ♪ To God the Father, God the Son, ♪ ♪ And God the Spirit, Three in One, ♪ ♪ Alleluia! Alleluia! ♪

Speaker: Oh Lord who knows that our hearts are empty, except thou fill them, and all our desires want except they crave after thee. Give us this hour, light and grace, courage and hope to seek and to find thee, that we may be thine and thou mayest be ours not just on Sundays, but always, Amen. You may be seated.

- Let us pray together the prayer for illumination.

- [Speaker And Congregation] 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 reading is from the words of the prophet Jeremiah. The seventeenth chapter starting with the fifth verse. Thus says the Lord: cursed are those who trust in mere mortals, and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord: they shall be like a shrub in the desert and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness in an uninhabited salt land. Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is in the Lord. They shall be like a tree, planted by water sending out its roots

by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes and its leaves shall stay green. In the year of drought, it is not anxious and it does not cease to bear fruit. The heart is devious above all else. It is perverse who can understand it. I, the Lord, test the mind and search the heart to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruits of their doings. This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

- This reading is from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 15 beginning with the 12th verse. Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified of God that he raised Christ whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished if for this life only, we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people, most to be pitied, but in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. This is the word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God. (organ music) ♪ O God who planted Eden well ♪ ♪ with trees both blest and cursed, ♪ ♪ yet would not thwart our human will ♪ ♪ when dazzled by the worst: ♪ ♪ from all the futile, fruitless sins ♪ ♪ we blame on age or youth, ♪ ♪ entice our souls to taste and see ♪ ♪ the goodness of your truth. ♪ ♪ O Spirit known in wind and flame, ♪ ♪ who kindled round a tree ♪ ♪ and from its unburnt leaves breathed forth ♪ ♪ with pow'r unnamed and free: ♪ ♪ as there you charged that Moses stand ♪ ♪ on holy ground unshod, ♪ ♪ unsheathe our guarded hearts and minds ♪ ♪ to feel and know our God. ♪ ♪ O Christ, once hailed with boughs of palm, ♪ ♪ soon fading to forlorn ♪ ♪ betrayal in an olive grove ♪ ♪ and mocking crown of thorn: ♪ ♪ help us to trust that seeds of hope ♪ ♪ root under weeds of strife, ♪ ♪ as from the cross that wrought your death ♪ ♪ has sprung our tree of life. ♪ ♪ Eternal Triune God of grace, ♪ ♪ bless us that we be made ♪ ♪ like fruitful trees beside a stream ♪ ♪ with leaves that never fade: ♪ ♪ establish us with wisdom's roots, ♪ ♪ our wayward growth remove, ♪ ♪ and nourish us with faith and hope ♪ ♪ to bear the fruit of love. ♪

- In the words of this hymn, unsheathe our guarded hearts and minds to know and to feel our God. Today's Gospel from Luke. He came down with them and stood on a level plain, but the great crowd of his disciples, a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and Tyre and Sidon who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. All the crowd sought to touch him. For power came forth from him and he healed them all. And he lifted up his eyes upon his disciples and he said Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when they hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and cast your name as evil on account of the son of man. Rejoice in that day, leap for joy for behold your reward is great in heaven. For so the forebears did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you that are full now for you shall hunger. Woe to you that laugh now for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, but so their fathers did to the false prophets. This is the word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

- Now I know that you do not feel as good as you look. I know that though you're all well dressed and hair combed and seated neatly in row upon row of pews, that your life is probably not in as good an order as you look. I know some of you have come here this morning hoping for some word, some honest word to cut through the building and music and the platitudes and the cliches, and name your pain rightly. But I also know that there may be more of you that hoping that somehow through the music, the sermon, the hymns, the prayers, the building, we might be able to anesthetize you and take away some of the pain for just fifteen minutes. But I know because I know myself. I know your tricks for deceit and evasion because I've played them myself, as well as you, better. Now I am happy that I do not preach at the crystal cathedral. I am happy that I do not have to preach at one of those happy TV churches where everybody looks so good and so young and so successful, and where they seem to kill their clergy when they reach fifty and get gray. (congregation laughs) I am happy that I don't bear the burden of preaching to a congregation that measures Sunday on the basis of how good you grin after the service because all it takes is one cancer diagnosis or one anorexic daughter, or even a lousy grade in organic for that jig to be up. In our better moments, and sometimes even Sunday is one of our better moments. In our better moments, we sense that the pain that we feel is somehow interconnected. The pain that we feel and the pain that we deny is somehow linked up to some larger discomfort. The cancer, a tip that our consumptive environment is poisoning itself. The anorexia a kind of revolt against a world in which physical appearance means everything, and we are only what we consume. A people who bomb babies in Baghdad need not be surprised to pick up the Durham Morning Herald and find an epidemic of baby bashing right here in Durham. Our purely private pain may be indicative of larger public pathology. The secret personal disorders which you brought in here this morning to church, these aches and pains, they may tip you off that something is amiss in the larger world, something is being dismantled, something is being brought down. There's a possibility of reconstruction. Something is shifting, like an old man's aching knees that only ache when the weather is about to turn. In today's Gospel, Jesus comes down on a level place. He comes down out of the pulpit, and stands with people down on a level place. Some of you may have heard these words in Matthew 4 and you remember in Matthew 4, these words are spoken. Jesus goes up on a mountain. He goes up on a mountain to speak these words, but in Luke, Jesus comes down on a plain, he comes down out of the pulpit, he stands next to people shoulder to shoulder. He rubs shoulders with the people where he experiences their disease and their infirmities and their possessions and he heals them. And then he speaks. He begins to preach. "O how blessed are you, who are poor. "Blessed are you who weep. "You shall laugh. Lucky are those of you who are enough in touch with reality to feel the pain. Lucky if you've still got enough of your wits about you to be able to cry. Lucky, blessed are you who weep now. You shall laugh. Jesus came down into a level place and he immersed himself in the pain of humanity, and he summoned people to weep. Fortunate are those of you who are poor now. Lucky are those of you who are empty, who are hungry, who haven't got enough to make it and you know it. Blessed are you. You find yourself suffering from a kind of gnawing hunger that will not be satisfied. Lucky are you who weep. Don't reach for the Darvon, weep. Just lucky are you that weep. Lucky are you that weep? She told me, "You know, I'm surprised with the difficulty "that I've had getting over his death. "I think I'm making progress. "I get along fine for a few weeks, "and then I open this drawer, "I see this tattered photograph, "and I'm just undone. "I wish I could make more progress on this grief." And I said to her, "But you are." Oh I quickly learned as a pastor, that the only dangerous grief is the grief that's unable

to grieve. The strong ones among us, the really strong ones are the ones able to weep, able to grieve. Or as a Duke undergraduate said it to me the other day, "We don't drink to have a good time. "We drink because we're not having a good time." It takes a lot of strength to be honest about the grief. When I went back into the parish ministry after a stint in seminary teaching, I was surprised, again, by how much time pastors spend with depressed people. Turns out there's an epidemic of depression. It's the modern American epidemic: we're depressed, and pastors spend a lot of time with depressed people. She called me early one morning, she said "Are you busy?" I said "No no, I'm just down here "waiting for someone to make my day." "Well could you come over? "I'm depressed." And when she would call, I would usually go over and we would talk, we would have prayer. I said "I'll come, I'm reading a book right now," "I'll come a little later." I was reading a book, a commentary on the prophet Jeremiah written by Walter Brueggemann who will preach here in two weeks, and no sooner had I put the telephone down, I was reading about the Prophet Jeremiah, and Brueggemann comments, "The prophets of Israel were not carping social critics. "They were not people who had some program "to push on the government for human betterment. "No, they were poets." All they had were just words, the prophets of Israel, just words, and through these words, they attempted to get people to grieve. The first prophetic move is grief-- just to let people grieve. And in grieving, to weep. And in weeping to let go, to acknowledge publicly something is wrong. Oh, later the prophets want people to catch a new vision for Israel, but you can't catch a new vision, Brueggemann said, as long as you're holding on to the old, and so prophets tried to wrench loose our grip to help us to grieve. By the time I got to her house that afternoon, I had very different pastoral care to offer. I said, "You know, I confess, "I've been dealing with you like you were sick or something. "I'm sorry. "You're a nice intelligent woman. "It appears that you have figured out "that all is not well in Greenville. "That's progress. "There's a lot of people who think "this is the best of all possible worlds. "This is a great place to live. "You, on the other hand, have realized something is wrong. "Something is out of sync. "You're grieving--that's good. "You may be about to make a move. "Go ahead, let go if you want to. "Maybe God can help you let go of the status quo "and help you move somewhere else, into some new future." Tears may be the beginning of health. "Seeing the joy of this bubble-brained world," wrote the poet Auden, "I thank God I could be unhappy." Or, as Jesus put it, "Lucky are you who weep now." Lucky if you sense somewhere down deep that something seems to be dying. Lucky, fortunate because the pain in your private life may be foretaste of some larger cosmic social dismantling. For Jesus it is clear that there was something much more dangerous than tears. It was a dangerous deception that this world is stable and secure, the best of all possible worlds-- "Don't worry; be happy." He warns in dark words of that deception. Woe to you who are happy. Woe to you who laugh now. Woe to you if you feel too good, if you're settled too comfortably with the way that things are. Against such self-congratulatory, self-deception, Jesus hurls a prophetic word: Woe to you that laugh now, and lucky are you that weep. Now I have noted, if you are say, twenty-one, twenty-two, on the verge of graduation, many of you are on the verge of tears. Well what's the matter with you? You oughta be happy, you're getting out of this place. May I suggest to you this morning that your dis-ease may be the intelligent creative response to our present dilemma? Maybe? Maybe we are awakening out of our great national daydream. If you are nineteen or twenty years old, there is evidence that you have been raised by the most selfish generation ever to rule this country. In the 70's and the 80's and the 90's, we have squandered your inheritance, run up an unbelievable deficit, and stolen from your children and your grandchildren. And we called it prosperity. And there are a few of you who are smart enough to know that an old world appears to be ending. That old American white male, Ronald Reagan, Milton Friedman, George

Will, Robert Schuyler world it may be just sort of dismantling. And you grieve, of course, because sometimes it feels like something secure, and even precious is being ripped off. You face commencement with a sense of loss, a sense of uncertainty, not sure of what tomorrow may bring. Well we're told that we have a number of choices. We can get pessimistic and despairing, or we can engage our mechanisms for denial and blame it on the Japanese, tear up a Toyota. I have come before you this morning to announce another way. Jesus offers another choice. These words were spoken amidst the ruins of Jerusalem. The devastation of a destroyed temple. The rubble of the first demise of Western civilization called Imperial Rome. And Jesus's word is this: lucky if you can embrace the loss, if you can touch the pain, if you can weep. And then the great evangelistic promise: you shall laugh. Yes, you shall. You shall sing, you shall rejoice. You shall see a new world being offered among the rubble and the ruin. And you cannot hear that powerful new word, unless it's out beyond, somewhere out of that territory beyond grief embraced. Cause if you hope too soon, if you laugh too early, this is self-deception. The reduction of Christian hope to November campaign fluff. Weep now, that you may laugh later. What you're hearing Jesus say here, I think, is a great affirmation of faith. Of faith that God gives life and God gives hope. Confidence in the midst of your chemotherapy. Confidence in the midst of your IBM interview. The gospel lesson does not tell us how, it just asserts what is: God gives life and hope. And I don't know which side of that equation is harder for us to believe. Laugh now and then cry later, or cry now so that we can laugh later. We academic types, I think, are prone to a kind of easy pessimism which masquerades as great intelligence. I think most of us are willing to speak of the loss, but we don't have the guts to name the hope. Humor, laughter, is therefore considered to be inappropriate for serious academic discourse. But Jesus says that laughter is the fruit of a serious engagement with the dead and the denial, a movement on the way to God's life-giving promise. You will laugh, Jesus says, not out of some bubble brained program for human betterment or self-esteem. You'll laugh simply because God is alive and God is busy puttering about the ruins of the Reagan years, getting ready to bring newness to those who can look for it. Of course I'll admit that with the promise of Jesus is a dark warning. If you laugh now, you may end up crying. If you're too rich right now, you may end up very poor. If you're filled now, you'll get to be empty later. If you spend too much energy thinking positively about what is, you won't be open to receive what will be. If you clutch too tightly to what you've got, you won't be open for the gift that God gives. You will laugh. Weep now. Is this true? Is it true that we must, like the recovering alcoholic in AA, hit bottom, go down, let go and cry it out before we can hope for help? Is it true that our future is not to be had by cautious careful retrenchment, but rather the result of God's joyful, playful gift? Yes, says the church, yes. The prophets have not lied to us. Yes, you shall laugh. Joy is the gift of God on the other side of grief. A gift of a God who is not limited by our myopic merely human vision. Yes, Sunday morning is a bold pushy move out beyond the tears. A bold venturing force beyond the present data. Without Sunday, all we've got is a kind of hopeless grief bereft in a world left to our own devices, or the temporary diversion of basketball. It just makes a lot of difference, is God alive or not? If God is not alive, then Jesus's talk of laughter is foolish. Yes, God wills the dismantling, the letting go. He works within it. You shall laugh, you shall laugh just like Sarah laughed. But not before she cried when she was told that though she was past ninety she was going to give birth to her first-born child. She cried. But then nine months later, she laughed when she did. You will weep now like the disciples who wept when Jesus told them, "I'm going away from you to prepare another place for you." But then they laughed on Easter when he returned. Oh believe the blessed beatific promise: the way to laughter leads first through loss. It always begins in grief; we believe it inevitably shall end in joy--when God turns tears to laughter and the holy joke is on us. (organ music) ♪ Oh day of peace that dearly

shines ♪♪ Through all our hopes and prayers and dreams ♪♪ Guide us to justice, truth and love ♪♪ Delivered from our selfish schemes ♪♪ May swords of hate fall from our hands ♪♪ Our hearts from envy find release ♪♪ Till by God's grace our warring world ♪♪ Shall see Christ's promised reign of peace ♪♪ Then shall the world dwell with the Lamb ♪♪ Nor shall the fears devour the small ♪♪ As beast and cattle calmly graze ♪♪ A little Child shall lead them home ♪♪ Then the meek shall learn to love ♪♪ All creatures find their true accord ♪♪ The hope of peace shall be fulfilled ♪♪ For all the earth shall know the Lord ♪

- The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

- Let us pray. O God of tears and laughter, the truth of your word startles our world, topples our securities, upsets our thinking, brings us to our knees. Before you we see the meaninglessness of our own life. The sin which has brought us down the path of futility and regret. We confess that our sin is a symptom of the greater disorder in our world. The disorders in our government, in our society, the ache in our hearts, the tears in our eyes. Help us to know that we have not lost our souls, that we have not lost the ability to feel and identify with the despair in our world. With the empty faces and stomachs that we see every day on our TV screens, in our work places, on our city streets. And so with unsteady voices, we raise our petitions to you on behalf of ourselves and our brothers and sisters around the world. We thank you, O God, for bringing us to judgment, to knowing that your love strikes us down before it raises us up. Thank you for exposing the broken and scattered pieces of our lives and for showing us that transformation is possible. Thank you for your forgiving love that delivers us from the meanness in our own selves. Thank you for showing us the agony in our world, for piercing our hearts with the knowledge of the pain out there beyond our selves. Instead of wringing our hands in desperation, we thank you that we can throw ourselves at your feet. We thank you that you raise us up with a vision of your kingdom, a place of blessedness where there are no tears, no heartaches, no death. And in this knowledge we ask for strength, to join you in ministering to those who have lost their way, to those who are paralyzed with fear of life. To those too weak of body or spirit to hold a job, to have a home, or to provide for the needs of their family. We ask for strength to join you in ministering to those who wrong their neighbors and cheat their country. To those whose service to their community is a mockery, to those who cannot or will not work toward peace. To those addicted to a life of misery and crime, We ask you for strength, O God to join you in ministering to those who have lost loved ones, to those who have lost their health. To those who are dying, to those who face grave dangers and difficult decisions. Bless us, O God with hope, with song, with laughter. Bless us with the strength to move out into the world bearing the good news of your joyous kingdom. Confident that you are a God who in truth and love surpasses in power the crippling sway of death through the hope of your son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen. And now in faithful response to God's love for us, may we bring our offerings to God to enrich the lives of the impoverished, and to bring God's creative light to our children. (organ music) ♪ Sing to the Lord ♪♪ Sing to the Lord ♪♪ Sing to the Lord ♪♪ Sing to the Lord no threadbare song. ♪ (organ music) ♪ Praise God from whom all blessings flow ♪♪ Praise God all creatures here below ♪♪ Alleluia, Alleluia ♪♪ Praise God the holy heavenly host ♪♪ Praise God the son and Holy Ghost ♪♪ Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia ♪ (choir vocalizes)

Speaker: And now with the confidence of children of God, let us pray the prayer our Lord taught us to pray saying

- [Speaker And Congregation] 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.

- And now may we go forth as God's people forgiven, healed, brought down, and lifted up, fed strengthened and empowered and may our weeping and rejoicing bind us together, uniting us for service in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit.

Choir: Amen, amen. (organ music) ♪ ♪ God the Spirit, guide and guardian, ♪ ♪ wind-sped flame and hovering dove, ♪ ♪ breath of life and voice of prophets, ♪ ♪ sign of blessing, power of love: ♪ ♪ give to those who lead your people ♪ ♪ fresh anointing of your grace; ♪ ♪ send them forth as bold apostles ♪ ♪ to your Church in every place. ♪ ♪ Christ our Savior, Sovereign, Shepherd, ♪ ♪ Word-made-flesh, Love crucified, ♪ ♪ teacher, healer, suffering Servant, ♪ ♪ friend of sinners, foe of pride: ♪ ♪ in your tending may all pastors ♪ ♪ learn and live a Shepherd's care; ♪ ♪ grant them courage and compassion ♪ ♪ shown through word and deed and prayer. ♪ ♪ Great Creator, Life-bestower, ♪ ♪ Truth beyond all thought's recall, ♪ ♪ fount of wisdom, womb of mercy, ♪ ♪ giving and forgiving all: ♪ ♪ as you know our strength and weakness, ♪ ♪ so may those the Church exalts ♪ ♪ oversee her life steadfastly ♪ ♪ yet not overlook her faults. ♪ ♪ Triune God, mysterious Being, ♪ ♪ undivided and diverse, ♪ ♪ deeper than our minds can fathom, ♪ ♪ greater than our creeds rehearse: ♪ ♪ help us in our varied callings ♪ ♪ your full image to proclaim, ♪ ♪ that our ministries uniting ♪ ♪ may give glory to your Name. ♪ (organ music)