

(elegant organ music) (gentle organ music)

- Good morning and welcome to this orientation, Sunday service, here in Duke Chapel. Particularly welcome our first year students, to the Duke Campus and also the Duke football team and their coaches, it's traditional for them to be with us here on this first Sunday. Duke Chapel Choir is back and for the next couple of weeks we'll be holding choir auditions, still possible to try out for the choir if you have not yet done so. We're glad to have the choir back. By the way, they will participate in a sing along of the Mozart Vespers this Tuesday at 8:00 p.m. here in the chapel. You're invited to come sing along or listen. Will be under the direction of our Choir Director, Rodney Wynkoop, who this summer became the toast of Brazil in music, after his summer there among them. And we are glad that he's back also. There are many opportunities for service and study here at Duke Chapel. Please look at the tear out sheet, it's at the back of the bulletin, drop that in the plate today and we'll be back in touch with you about those opportunities. We welcome today, beginning the new year, a new assistant dean of the chapel, Reverend Deborah Brazell. Her first sermon here in the chapel was last Sunday, and she immediately had a nationally syndicated article written in response to her sermon by Mr. McManus. Which was a great beginning and we welcome her also to Duke. Now let's stand for 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 the Lord. ("All Creatures of Our God and King") ♪ All creatures of our God and King ♪ ♪  
Lift up your voice and with us sing ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou burning sun with golden beam ♪ ♪ Thou  
silver moon with softer gleam ♪ ♪ O praise Him, O praise Him ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou  
rushing wind that art so strong ♪ ♪ Ye clouds that sail in heav'n along ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou rising  
moon, in praise rejoice ♪ ♪ Ye lights of evening, find a voice ♪ ♪ O praise Him, O praise Him ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪  
Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou flowing water, pure and clear ♪ ♪ Make music for thy Lord to hear ♪ ♪ Alleluia,  
alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou fire so masterful and bright ♪ ♪ That givest man both warmth and light ♪ ♪ O praise Him, O  
praise Him ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ All creatures of our God and King ♪ ♪ Lift up your voice and  
with us sing ♪ ♪ Let us praise Him ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou burning sun with golden beam ♪ ♪ Thou silver  
moon with softer gleam ♪ ♪ O praise Him ♪ ♪ O praise Him ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ And all ye  
men of tender heart ♪ ♪ Forgiving others, take your part ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Ye who long pain and sorrow  
bear ♪ ♪ Praise God and on Him cast your care ♪ ♪ O praise Him, O praise Him ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪  
Alleluia ♪ ♪ All creatures of our God and King ♪ ♪ Lift up your voice and with us sing ♪ ♪ Let us praise Him ♪ ♪  
Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou burning sun with golden beam ♪ ♪ Thou silver moon with softer gleam ♪ ♪ O praise  
Him ♪ ♪ O praise Him ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Let all things their Creator bless ♪ ♪ And worship  
Him in humbleness ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son ♪ ♪ And praise the Spirit,  
Three in One ♪ ♪ O praise Him, O praise Him ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪

- 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 is taken from the book of Genesis. "Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, "because she was barren; "and the Lord granted his prayer, "and his wife Rebekah conceived. "The children struggled together within her; "and she said, 'If it is to be this way, why do I live?' "So she went to inquire of the Lord. "And the Lord said to her, ""Two nations are in your womb, "and two peoples born of you shall be divided; "the one shall be stronger than the other, "the elder shall serve the younger.' "When her time to give birth, there were twins in her womb. "The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; "so they named him Esau. "Afterward his brother came out, "with his hand gripping Esau's heel; "so he was named Jacob. "Isaac was 60 years old when she bore them. "When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, "a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, "living in tents. "Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; "but Rebekah loved Jacob. "Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, "Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. "Esau said to Jacob, 'Let me eat some of that red stuff, "for I am famished!' "Therefore he was called Edom. "Jacob said, 'First sell me your birthright.' "Esau said, 'I am about to die; "of what use is a birthright to me?' "Jacob said, 'Swear to me first.' "So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. "Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, "and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. "Thus Esau despised his birthright." This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

- The Psalm is found on page 844, let us stand and join in singing the Psalm together. (slow organ music) ♪ I lift up my eyes to the hills ♪ ♪ From whence does my help come ♪ ♪ My help comes from the Lord ♪ ♪ Who made heaven and earth ♪ ♪ The Lord will not let your foot be moved ♪ ♪ The Lord who keeps you will not slumber ♪ ♪ He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep ♪ ♪ The Lord is your keeper ♪ ♪ The Lord is your shade at your right hand ♪ ♪ The sun shall not smite you by day ♪ ♪ Nor the moon by night ♪ ♪ The Lord will keep you from all evil ♪ ♪ And will keep your life ♪ ♪ The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in ♪ ♪ From this time forth and forevermore ♪ ♪ All glory be to you, O God ♪ ♪ And to Jesus Christ our savior ♪ ♪ The Lord is your shade on your right hand ♪ ♪ As it was since time began ♪ ♪ From this time forth and forevermore ♪

- This reading is from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. "But God chose what is foolish in the world "to shame the wise; "God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; "God chose what is low and despised in the world, "things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, "So that no one might boast in the presence of God." This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

- This reading is taken from the Gospel according to St. Mark. "Now when the Pharisees and some of the

scribes who had come "from Jerusalem gathered around him, "they noticed that some of his disciples were eating "with defiled hands, that is without washing them. "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, "do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, "thus observing the tradition of the elders; "and they do not eat anything from the market "unless they wash it; "and there are also many other traditions that they observe, "the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles. "So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "'Why do your disciples not live according "to the tradition of the elders, "but eat with defiled hands?' "He said to them, 'Isaiah prophesied rightly "about you hypocrites, as it is written, "this people honors me with their lips, "but their hearts are far from me; "in vain do they worship me, "teaching human precepts as doctrines. "You abandon the commandment of God "and hold to human tradition.' "Then he called the crowd again "and said to them, 'Listen to me, all of you, "and understand, there is nothing outside a person "that by going in can defile, "but the things that come out are what defile.' "For it is from within, from the human heart, "that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, "adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, "envy, slander, folly, pride. "All these evil things come from within, "and they defile a person." This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God. ("He, Watching Over Israel" by Mendelssohn) ♪ He watching o'er Israel ♪ ♪  
Slumbers not nor sleeps ♪ ♪ He watching o'er Israel ♪ ♪ He slumbers not nor sleeps ♪ ♪ He watching  
slumbers not nor sleep ♪ ♪ He slumbers not nor sleeps ♪ ♪ He watching o'er Israel ♪ ♪ Slumbers not nor sleep  
♪ ♪ Slumbers not nor sleeps ♪ ♪ Shouldst thou walking in grief ♪ ♪ Languish ♪ ♪ Shouldst thou walking in grief  
♪ ♪ Languish ♪ ♪ Shouldst thou walking in grief ♪ ♪ Languish ♪ ♪ Shouldst thou walking in grief ♪ ♪ Languish ♪ ♪  
Shouldst thou walking in grief ♪ ♪ Languish ♪ ♪ Shouldst thou walking in grief ♪ ♪ Languish ♪ ♪ Shouldst  
thou walking in grief ♪ ♪ Languish ♪ ♪ Shouldst thou walking in grief ♪ ♪ Languish ♪ ♪ Shouldst thou walking  
in grief ♪ ♪ Languish ♪ ♪ He will ♪ ♪ Shouldst thou walking in grief ♪ ♪ Languish ♪ ♪ He slumbers not nor  
sleeps ♪ ♪ He slumbers not nor sleeps ♪ (overlapping singing) ♪ He watches o'er Israel ♪ ♪ Slumbers not nor  
sleep ♪ ♪ He watches o'er Israel ♪ ♪ Slumbers not nor sleep ♪ ♪ He slumbers not ♪ (overlapping singing) ♪ He  
slumbers not ♪ ♪ He slumbers not ♪ ♪ Sleeps, not ♪ ♪ He watching o're Israel slumbers not ♪ ♪ Nor sleep ♪

- Here we are at the beginning of a new school year, and here at the beginning, I plan to preach a series of sermons from the book of Genesis. A book of the Bible whose name means in the beginning. Sermon series are risky, but one thing, if you don't like the first sermon, would you be back for more? I remember when I was a child, our pastor announced a sermon series on the Lord's prayer. The first sermon was an exposition on the word our, then the next week it was father. By the tenth sermon, a memorable exposition of "us not," the congregation had dwindled. Such a series is risky for another reason, and that is I planned to preach this to introduce you to the Genesis stories of Jacob. Jacob, the Father of Israel. Here is a set of stories from Israel's distant past, a set of stories that biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann, who's preached frequently from this pulpit has said, "Present Israel at it's earthiest, and most scandalous." And that's risky. 'Cause I know that one reason that many of you are here this morning, is that you are seeking to be edified in some moral way. Perhaps you're here, gotten out of bed, come down hoping that your experience at the Chapel will make you a better person. Well, you can forget it. Far as I can tell there is absolutely nothing of any uplifting moral intent in these stories about Jacob. There is nothing here that will help Dean Wasiolek keep a lid on the dorms better this year than last. There is nothing that will energize you to study harder than you studied last year. No. And yet I challenge you to find a Bible story more robust in its depiction of a real God,

working amidst real people. With puckish good humor, without moralizing intent, the stories of Jacob. A tale of a family that's in a mess. A family made messier by the very promises of God to bless this family. Here we have such real morally dubious people. I am betting that a lot of us will recognize ourselves and our families in these stories before we are done in the telling. Well the story of Jacob begins before today's text from Genesis. It begins in the dim, dark days of history, that starlit night when God took Abraham out and had him look up into the sky and says, "Look at those stars. "I promise you I will make out of you a nation so great, "that it will be more numerous "even than those stars in the heavens." When Abraham's wife hears the promise, Sara laughs because Abraham is already over 100 and she's in her 90's. Nine months later, she gives birth to her first child. And they call him Issac. Which means laughter. So laughable was this promise of God. And Issac grows up and Issac marries Rebekah. But they are married for many years and they have no children. And so this raises the question about, what about the promise of God? Is God faithful or not? Can God make good on God's promises? To make out of these people, these old barren people, a family? Will God keep God's promises? So Issac prays to God for a child, and with that prayer, people be careful how you pray, with that prayer the trouble begins. The texts says, "Rebekah conceived and even in her womb there is trouble." There in the mysterious uterine darkness, there is conflict in her womb, because there is not just one fetus, but two fetuses in Rebekah's womb. And they are already locked in dark struggle. Rebekah feels the conflict even before the children are born. Feeling these rumblings within her, Rebekah exclaims, and this is where our text begins, "If motherhood is going to be like this, "why do I even live?" She demands a refund from her lamaze classes. I thought you said this was going to be painless birth. Rebekah inquires of the Lord, "What are you doing here?" And the Lords explains, "At first I thought I would bless you with a child, "but then I decided while I was at it, "to bless you with twins." Just to keep it interesting. "There are not just two boys in your womb Rebekah, "there are two whole nations there, locked in struggle. "You thought this birth "was gonna be something a little sweet, "to comfort you in your old age, no. "I am doing something big, cosmic, international in you, "I am moving peoples around "and changing the course of history in you." And Rebekah says, "This is your idea of blessing?" You see that there seems there's no such thing as painless birth, particularly if that birth be from the promises of God. And so sermon point one, please write this down: The promises of God often, paradoxically, involve great pain. I know a woman about Rebekah's age, she spent her whole marriage without a child. She prayed to God. Later in life she gave birth to a child, and she named the child Grace, which means gift, 'cause that's what it felt like. This unexpected gift of God, but the child whom she called Grace, the world called down-syndrome. She has now given the rest of her life to working with children like her Grace. Now how can there be such pain in such blessing? Or on the other hand, how can such blessing come out of such great pain? It's a mystery we're about here. Deep, dark, mysterious, in utero, conflict, and this conflict is going to be a prelude to the rest of Jacob's story. In time Rebekah gives birth to the first born, the twin is delivered. The Bible says he's red, his whole body covered in hair. So they name him red, or Esau. And pulling little red out of the womb, they were surprised to find that the other twin, in his little hand was clutching his brother's heel. "Look at that!", said the attending obstetrician, so desperate was he to be first out of the womb, to be first born, he's trying to pull his older brother back into the womb. Got him by the heel, and so they call the second child heel, or grabber, Jacob. Which, as it turns out, was an apt name if ever there were one. Is there anything worse than a heel? So now in the story we've got red the older brother, and then we've got his little brother Jacob, or the heel. Esau and Jacob. And though they were twins, they were not identical twins. They had absolutely nothing in common, this is not The Cosby Show, we're talking The Simpsons here. (congregation laughing)

Esau was the macho type. He loved to hunt, he loved to play football with other hairy types. (congregation laughing) He liked nothing better than to mix it up on a Saturday afternoon with the boys. Jacob, the Bible says, on the other hand was a quiet man, living in tents. Which is the Bible's way of saying he stayed home, he practiced piano, he cooked gourmet meals, he was philosophically opposed to football, thought in encouraged violence. (congregation laughing) Is it a shock to you that the Bible then says Issac loved Esau, Rebekah loved Jacob? What kind of family is this? Mom and Dad showing favoritism, partiality. Dad loved one of the twins, Esau. Mom loves the other, Jacob. What kind of family is this? These are real parents here, maybe your parents. Oh not that your parents love your little sister more than they love you, although they might. (congregation laughing) Dear, it is not that I don't love you, it's just that I find it difficult to be enthusiastic about your athletic exploits. Scoring touchdowns is fine, but we would be so grateful if every now and then you'd read a book. And perhaps I would be a bit more affectionate if you took a bath and your friends on their Harley's. But of course this Bible story is told before the days of modern psychological rationalization. And so the story just says bluntly, Issac loved Esau; Rebekah had her money on Jacob. One day Jacob was cooking, or as he called it creating in the kitchen. He smelled a strange odor. It was his big brother Esau coming in from hunting. (congregation laughing) Esau says to his little brother, "Let me have some of that red stuff "what you got in the pot, I'm starved." "It's not red stuff," said Jacob, "It's beef bourguignon." (congregation laughing) "Whatever, let me have it." Little brother Jacob now sees his chance to jump. "Well how hungry are you?" "I'm dying," said Esau "Dying?" "Oh good. (congregation laughing) "Let me have your birthright "and then I'll give you some of this stew to eat. "Give me your inheritance." In other words big brother, drop dead. Make me the inheritor of the family estate, the heir, the first born, head of the family. Go ahead and subvert the entire near eastern pattern of social arrangement. Go ahead and knock down the foundation upon which our whole culture is based. To heck with primogenitor, give me your birthright. And Esau, always incapable of taking the long view said, "What good's a birthright when I'm starving?" "Let me eat, you'll get my birthright." The Bible says that Esau ate, and he drank, and he rose and he went his way. A way considerably downhill after that fateful meeting with little brother. This is the end of the Jacob saga, chapter one. And if you must have a moral Dean Wasiolek, I can think of none other, other than something like, never trust anybody who's a gourmet, especially if it happens to be your little brother. But as I warned you at the beginning, there really isn't a moral in this story. No, it's because here's a story not so much about people like our parents. Issac and Rebekah. Or not even a story about people like us, Jacob and Esau. It's really a story about God. It's a story about the promises of God, and the weird things that these promises do to people. So Sermon point number two: The promises of God subvert the old order. Sermon point one: The promises of God often involve pain, and a major source of that pain of the promises of God, is that the promises of God are often inverting, subverting. They intrude into our patterns and arrangements. The promises of God are often shoved into our lives, busy creating out of nothing, things that are. Busy changing the way things are into the way by God things are going to be. No social convention was dearer to the people of the ancient near east than the right of primogenitor, the right of the first born. The rights of the first born insured social order and stability in the near eastern world. It was a wonderful arrangement 'cause you knew your place in life from the day you were born. The first born son gets everything, the second born son gets leftovers, and the daughters get nothing. And it was just so neat and it was clean and it was orderly. It was a secure 1950's Ozzy and Harriet sort of world, where father always knows best and mom is a bit fuzzy-headed but she's locked safe in the kitchen. And older brother David is thoughtful and he's stable, and little brother Ricky is undependable, but that's okay because he's not going

to get anything in the end anyway. You were just fixed at birth. Fixed. Fate determined while you were still in utero, by the color of your skin or by your gender or your parents' economic level or the order of your birth. You were just fixed from the day you were born. But you see, here's a story, Bible story, about us getting mixed up in our conventions. About God's destabilizing promise. Two nations are in your womb, two peoples, one shall be stronger than the other, surprise, the elder shall serve the younger. Even in Rebekah's womb, in the primal darkness, cosmic international purposes are being worked out through the promises of God. In the clash of these all too typical brothers, God is busy dismantling conventional systems of power distribution. And some of you are here this morning, because you have somehow gotten the crazy subverting Godly notion, that God is dismantling older systems and arrangements through you. You're not supposed to be here. If history is to be believed, you're the wrong gender, you're the wrong race, you grew up in the wrong family, but somehow you got it in your head the crazy notion God was making to you a promise, and you believed it. But I have a hunch the majority of us are here, at Duke, students, faculty, friends. We're here as older brothers, so to speak. That is, most of us have been fortunate since birth. The cards have been stacked in our favor, the stars were right, everything was just right for us. As Maya Angelou told the first year students last year, and will probably tell them again tonight, in this chapel, we've done the best on you we know how to do in this culture. We can't do any better than we've done with you. You've been paid for. How privileged, at Duke, this is primogenital. And so we may find ourselves in the story, surprised to look back and find little brother, little brother Jacob clutching at our heel. Is there anyone here this morning who can not identify with a once self assured-nation? Planning to use our power the same way that our forebears used their power. Shocked to wake up from our national stupor of material gratification to find little brother, these little nobody nations clutching at our heel. The repositories of oil, economic success. Do we see here a divine upsetting of conventional power arrangements? Do we see others claiming that economic birthright that was supposed to be ours? Can it be as one was to say much later, that God is busy making the last to be first and the first to be last. Is there some secret dark force behind the lives of ordinary people? One who has chosen what is low and despised in this world to bring to nothing the things that are? The story will be continued. ("Come Down O Love Divine") ♪ Come down, O love divine ♪ ♪ Seek thou this soul of mine ♪ ♪ And visit it with thine own ardor glowing ♪ ♪ O Comforter, draw near ♪ ♪ Within my heart appear ♪ ♪ And kindle it ♪ ♪ Thy holy flame bestowing ♪ ♪ O let it freely burn ♪ ♪ Till earthly passions turn ♪ ♪ To dust and ashes in its heat consuming ♪ ♪ And let thy glorious light ♪ ♪ Shine ever on my sight ♪ ♪ And clothe me round, the while my path illuming ♪ ♪ And so the yearning strong ♪ ♪ With which the soul will long ♪ ♪ Shall far outpass the power of human telling ♪ ♪ For none can guess its grace ♪ ♪ Till they become the place ♪ ♪ Where-in the Holy Spirit finds a dwelling ♪

- The Lord be with you.

- And also with you.

- Let us pray. Oh God of beginnings, we pray for your guiding wisdom as we begin this academic year. We have many conflicting feelings about beginnings. Excitement, uncertainty, anxiety, and hopefulness. All things seem possible in the beginning, yet very quickly our limits begin to make themselves known. Help us prioritize our time and lives this semester. Help us focus on the things that really matter. Because when we're offered so many choices, it's easy to lose our direction and identity. Remind us of who we are and



♪♪ Alleluia ♪

- Let us pray. In faith and gratitude, we return these gifts that they may proclaim the mystery of your love, and glorify the gospel. May hearts and lives be drawn to you by the witness our offering will make in this community of faith and among all those you call us to serve. And now let us pray with confidence as the children of God. Our father.

All: Who art in heaven, hallowed be the 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

- Amen. Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord in all that you do. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the holy spirit. (soft organ music) ♪ Amen ♪♪ Amen ♪♪ Amen ♪♪ Amen ♪ ("The Church's One Foundation") ♪ The church's one foundation ♪♪ Is Jesus Christ her Lord ♪♪ She is his new creation ♪♪ By water and the Word ♪♪ From heaven he came and sought her ♪♪ To be his holy bride ♪♪ With his own blood he bought her ♪♪ And for her life he died ♪♪ Elect from every nation ♪♪ Yet one o'er all the earth ♪♪ Her charter of salvation ♪♪ One Lord, one faith, one birth ♪♪ One holy name she blesses ♪♪ Partakes one holy food ♪♪ And to one hope she presses ♪♪ With every grace endued ♪♪ Though with a scornful wonder ♪♪ We see her sore oppressed ♪♪ By schisms rent asunder ♪♪ By heresies distressed ♪♪ Yet saints their watch are keeping ♪♪ Their cry goes up, how long ♪♪ And soon the night of weeping ♪♪ Shall be the morn of song ♪♪ Mid toil and tribulation ♪♪ And tumult of her war ♪♪ She waits the consummation ♪♪ Of peace forevermore ♪♪ Till, with the vision glorious ♪♪ Her longing eyes are blessed ♪♪ And the great church victorious ♪♪ Shall be the church at rest ♪♪ Yet she on earth hath union ♪♪ With God the Three in One ♪♪ And mystic sweet communion ♪♪ With those whose rest is won ♪♪ O happy ones and holy ♪♪ Lord, give us grace that we ♪♪ Like them, the meek and lowly ♪♪ On high may dwell with thee ♪ (lively organ music)