

(beeping) (chiming bell music) (soft bell music) (upbeat bell music) (bright bell music) (upbeat bell music)
(paper rustling) (somber organ music) (upbeat organ music)

- Oh, come let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord, our maker, for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous, his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord that he may have mercy upon him and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, "neither are your ways my ways," says the Lord. For we, like sheep, have gone astray, let us confess to God that our ways are not his ways. Be seated. Oh, Lord, holy and righteous God, we acknowledge before you that we do not fear you and that we do not love you above all things. We do not delight in prayer, nor take pleasure in your word. We do not really love our neighbor. We lack the conscience that should accompany our own Christian profession. Our hearts are divided, crossed by doubts and guilty desires. We accuse ourselves before you, oh God, we implore you, whose nature and whose name is love, to forgive us, and in forgiving, to heal us so that in our lives something will finally be changed. Hear these words of assurance from Saint Paul. "For at the very time when we were still powerless, "then Christ died for the wicked. "Even for a just man, if one of us would hardly die, "though perhaps for a good man, "one might actually brave death. "But Christ died for us while we were yet sinners "and that is God's own proof of his love towards us." Therefore, let us give thanks, for God is good and God's love is everlasting. Thanks be to God whose love has made us. Thanks be to God whose mercy forgives us. Thanks be to God whose promise secures us. Amen. We welcome you to the worship of God in Duke Chapel on this second Sunday in Lent. We pray God's blessings upon you in this season of penitence and preparation for the sacrifice of our Lord upon the cross. Whether you live, work, or study among us, or you are a visitor to us this day, be assured that, because this is the Father's house, and we are all his children, you are quite literally at home with us in this hour. We especially welcome the Bell Choir of the First Baptist Church of Henderson, North Carolina. They will be playing a brief concert after the prelude, this morning. After the postlude, forgive me. We also welcome our guest preacher today, who is in reality no guest to us at all. Dr. D. Moody Smith is the professor of New Testament Interpretation, both in the Divinity School and the graduate department of religion of the university. Dr. Smith, we welcome you to our pulpit again.

- Let us pray. Oh, Lord, our God, you have given your word to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Grant us grace to receive your truth in faith and love that by it, we may be prepared unto every good word and work, to the glory of your name through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. The Old Testament lesson is from Genesis, chapter 12, verses one through eight. Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred "and your father's house "to the land that I will show you. "And I will make of you a great nation "and I will bless you and make your name great "so that you will be a blessing. "I will bless those who bless you "and those who curse you, I will curse. "And by you, all the families "of the Earth shall bless themselves." So Abram went as the Lord had told him and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Harran, and Abram took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their

possessions which they had gathered, and the persons they had gotten in Harran. And they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem to the oak of Moreh. At that time, the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants, I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him. Thence, he removed to the mountain on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there, he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. Here ends the reading from the Old Testament. Amen. (joyful bell music) Will the congregation please stand for the reading of the gospel lesson? The gospel lesson is from the Gospel According to John, chapter 4, verses five through 26. So Jesus came to a city of Samaria called Sychar near the field that Jacob gave to his son, Joseph. Jacob's well was there and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink," for his disciples has gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, "a woman of Samaria, "for Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, "and who it is that is saying to you, give me a drink, "you would've asked him "and he would've given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, "and the well is deep. "Where do you get that living water? "Are you greater than our father, Jacob, "who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, "and his sons, and his cattle?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him, "will never thirst. "The water that I shall give him will become, in him, "a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst, "nor come here to draw." Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying I have no husband "for you have had five husbands "and he whom you now have is not your husband." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you're a prophet. "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain "and you say that in Jerusalem is the place "where men ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me. "The hour is coming when neither on this mountain "nor in Jerusalem, will you worship the Father. "You worshiped what you do not know. "We worship what we know, "for salvation is from the Jews, "but the hour is coming and now is, "when the true worshipers will worship the Father "in Spirit and truth, "for such the Father seeks to worship him. "God is Spirit and those who worship him "must worship in Spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming, "he who is called Christ. "When he comes, he will show us all things." Jesus said to her, "I, who speak to you, am he." Here ends the reading from the gospel lesson. Amen. (somber organ music)

- Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, oh Lord, our strength, and our redeemer. Amen. The story of the woman of Samaria is an intriguing story and a great story. It's a good story. It's not a short story, though. And even our gospel reading for this morning does not tell the whole story, although it ends on one of its climactic points. Jesus reveals to the woman that he is the Messiah and yet, the story continues from there as the disciples come back, the woman leaves, and the Samaritans arrive on the scene, but we didn't have time for all of that in our gospel lesson. The Gospel of John is, in some ways, a strange book, and one of the outstanding testimonies to its character occurred here in this chapel a number of years ago. A student was reading the Scripture, John 14:18-24 was the announced lesson. And I was listening as one, I must admit, sometimes listens to Scripture, attending and then not attending, and suddenly I realized we were in chapter 15. That's a little long, I thought. Then,

chapter 16, and I thought maybe he will read all of the Farewell Discourses. That would make some sense but not as the morning lesson. I remember distinctly we were not standing for the gospel, on that occasion. I thought surely he would stop at the end of chapter 16, but, all of a sudden, Jesus lifted up his eyes to pray and I realized we had begun chapter 17. One of my boys had taken off his jacket, about chapter 15, and now he removed his tie. And I thought, well, maybe it will end at the end of the prayer, but no, Jesus and his disciples go out across the Kidron Valley and we're in the Passion Narrative proper, chapter 18. And I'm wondering if it will ever end, but just where it says that Peter was standing and warming himself, hands reached up and pulled the young man down from behind. Thus endeth the reading of the gospel.

(congregation laughs) The sermon, mercifully, was a little shorter that morning. As I then scrutinized the Order of Worship, I decided the lector must have thought that 14 colon, 18 hypen 24, meant through the 24th chapter of the Gospel of John. Of course, we were then clearly headed for trouble because the Gospel of John ends with the 21st chapter. It would have been interesting to see whether we would have gone on into the book of Acts, looking for a 24th chapter. But fortunately, we shall never know. Now, I think there was something wonderful about this bizarre interlude and I wouldn't take anything for having been here when it happened. Of course, there were a few moments of puzzlement and embarrassment all around. Actually, the only people who should have been embarrassed were those of us who might have briefed the young lector more thoroughly on his assignment. However that may be, I found this out-of-the-ordinary occurrence quite appropriate to the character of the Gospel According to John, and in two ways. First, John, unlike the other gospels, contains lengthy episodes, conversations, and debates. As in the case of the woman of Samaria, it's sometimes hard to know where you ought to stop. In addition, John's gospel is full of surprises, particularly the people who talk with Jesus are surprised, and shocked, and perplexed. The Samaritan woman certainly was, and sitting in this chapel on that morning, I, with several hundred other worshipers, was surprised, shocked, and perplexed. But there was something genuinely, if vaguely, right about that scene. For in John's gospel, the people who encounter Jesus must think, "This can't be happening or I can't believe what I'm hearing." Jesus' conversation with the woman of Samaria is like that. He asks her for a drink. She cannot understand how a Jew can ask that of a Samaritan. And we're told that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Although maybe what John meant is that Jews do not drink from the same utensils as Samaritans and that would explain the woman's surprise, too. But either way, it amounts to the same thing. And then Jesus says, in effect, if you knew anything worth knowing, you'd have asked me for a drink instead and I would have given you living water. It could mean, and be translated, running water, and the Evangelist plays upon that double meaning. Running water, living water. The woman is thinking of running water from the spring or well, while Jesus means the living water, which he dispenses. They are not the same. The woman does not know it, but Jesus knows it and the reader is invited to learn it. Meantime, the woman's consternation is great. "Can Jesus be greater than Jacob, who gave us the well in the first place?" "Hardly," she thinks. And yet, John wants us to understand that Jesus, in fact, is greater. Jesus then tells the woman that the water he gives, unlike the well water or any other water, will quench thirst forever and never run out. And she says, "All right, give me this water, that I may not thirst nor come here to draw." Now, if anything is plain in this story, it is that Jesus and the woman are talking on different levels. He understands her but she doesn't understand him. He knows there is a living water different from any earthly water. She does not know it and is perplexed. And the result is that they talk past each other. The woman does not comprehend Jesus. He may understand her but, in the story, there is no indication that Jesus even hears her and if you take it on the level of ordinary conversation, Jesus seems unspeakably

rude. But then, this is no ordinary conversation. Every sign and hint in the narrative shows that it's an extraordinary conversation. How can the woman ever understand Jesus, unless he gets down on her level? And we have no assurance that they will come to any meeting of the minds. Just when it seems that the conversation is going to go off in, or has gone off, in opposite directions, a break occurs. "Go call your husband and come here." "I have no husband." "You're right in saying I have no husband for you have had five husbands and the man you are now living with is not your husband." "Sir, I perceive that you're a prophet." So Jesus knows this woman thoroughly. He announces to her the character of her life and she is astonished. How did he know this? Well, we may, with the woman, draw our own conclusions. He is a prophet and, as she will later muse, even the Christ. And Jesus will go on to reveal that he is, indeed, the Christ. But before that, he has, so to speak, revealed to this woman who she is. And only now may she begin to appreciate what he may be for her. Crucial to our understanding of this text is the link between Jesus' revelation of the woman's past and her consciousness of her thirst. I want to think, to reflect, about that for a moment or two. She wants the kind of water that can quench earthly thirst and she wants it in unlimited supply. She wants the water she already knows for a thirst she knows that she has and that she will experience again and again. Her thirsting is this-worldly, down to earth. So is her desire for water. She wants the water she already knows to continue forever. Now, the woman's desire to have a kind of assurance that her water supply will be permanent can very easily be trivialized. Maybe she is just stupid or without any sense of what Jesus is about. She wants an everlasting waterworks. But I don't think it's quite so simple. Her desire to have this water is the expression of a natural human longing to be assured of those good things that meet our needs and make our lives meaningful. This is the same as our wanting the things we have possessed, and know to be good in neverending supply. I wanted Arthur Ashe always to play Davis Cup for the USA. I wanted Walter Cronkite always to give the CBS Evening News, and before that, Eric Sevareid to tell us what it meant. I wanted Arthur Fiedler always to conduct the Boston Pops, and Gene Banks and Kenny Dennard always to play forward for Duke, but alas. All these wonderful things and people run their course. We have them and we have them not. They cannot be for us a well of water leaping up to eternal life. The woman's thirst and Jesus' revelation of her past are bound together. She wants a neverending water supply and she has had five husbands and a lover. Sometimes John tells us more than we want to know, other times not enough. This time he does not tell us enough. What exactly do the five husbands mean? Are they the five gods, the five false gods, of the Samaritans, as some commentators say? There's nothing explicit about that in the text. Do they reflect on the character of this woman? Probably. She is no paragon of virtue, but her immorality is not the point. But what if they represent her quest for fulfillment in life? Can it be that the Samaritan woman is the counterpart of so many modern quests for self-realization? Self-fulfillment? While on a trip last weekend, I had the car radio on and for the first time, and I hope for the last, I heard an awful ballad, which must be called "Alice Doesn't Love You Anymore." Probably cribbed from "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore." I don't remember all of the sordid details, but the ballad is sung from the standpoint of the husband. His wife has just dropped off the children, put the dog out, taken the car, and left town, and him, for good. She leaves behind a note. She has gone away to seek whatever it is that life may hold for her, because it sure hasn't held much so far. Now, there's a familiar story. We've all seen Kramer vs. Kramer. That film was popular for many reasons, but one of them was its accuracy in showing a slice of contemporary human life. People, not just wives, people leave responsibilities and break off human relationships because they don't live up to their expectations. Our days pass, our lives pass with them. It's not simply a matter of unfulfilled sexual desire. More likely, it's fulfilled sexual desire, accompanied by

emptiness. The promise of youth is not fulfilled. Hopes dry up and aspirations wither. The story is basically the same in many times and many places. You can fill in the names. Now, John does not say all of this, but he suggests it. The unfulfillment, the longing, the estrangement of the Samaritan woman's life are mirrored in her five husbands plus one. If so, she is, indeed, an ancient counterpart of many uneasy and unnerving quests for personal fulfillment in our own day. But she is more than that. She is the symbol of our own thirsting for the water of life. Thus, the woman's thirst for water and Jesus' revelation of her life belong together. She desires the assurance of the good things of this world, even as her own quest has led her to and fro, away from any steadfastness and stability in her life. She knows of her need, so she jumps at the chance to be fulfilled, to have her thirst quenched, quenched by the miraculous water that Jesus can supply. Still, she really does not know what, or whence, he is. Now, this is far from the end of the story and we'll not go through all of it this morning. But we have reached an important vantage point. The woman of Samaria has had her life and her need exposed, revealed, by Jesus. And Jesus presents himself as the giver of water, the giver of water that can quench the thirst of unfulfilled human life. The woman recognizes Jesus to be a prophet and then asks that religious question about where people ought to worship, here or in Jerusalem? Now, as a clergyman, I have some sense of what is happening here. I am sitting on a plane or at a well, and having a good conversation and it comes out that I am some kind of professional religious person. So, the conversation immediately shifts ground. The tone and the subject matter change. In the presence of a person of the cloth, people tend to assume a different style. They may tell me about Aunt Sarah, who saw spooks and heard voices. While in seminary, I had a barber whose rich, human insights and wisdom were couched in exquisite obscenities and I would never tell him who I was for fear, or in the certain knowledge, I would never hear from him again. Well, the analogy with Jesus and the woman of Samaria is, of course, not exact, but it is a fact that she does now send the conversation in a new direction and that gives Jesus the opportunity of speaking about worship in Spirit and in truth. Spirit and truth. What do they mean? First, they do not mean invisible and abstract. Jesus is not here contrasting sacrificial worship with a Quaker meeting. Spirit and truth are the Spirit of God and the truth of God as Jesus brings and reveals them. God, in fact, is Spirit and seeks true worshipers who will worship him in that way. Now, our woman never gives much indication that she has understood. She goes away still amazed that Jesus could tell her the most intimate details of her personal life. She testifies, and many of her fellow Samaritans believe, and later on in the story, these Samaritans meet Jesus and invite him to stay with them. The woman's report about Jesus' startling revelation then becomes the beginning point and not the end of their faith and they say to the woman, "It is not longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard ourselves and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world." The Savior of the world. Perhaps the noblest title ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament and yet, it was also, in antiquity, ascribed to the Roman emperor. But apart from Spirit and truth, apart from the living water, that title, Savior of the world, is so universal, so grandiose, as to be nearly meaningless. We do not need the Savior of the world so much as we need living water. Jesus, the Samaritan woman is told, gives the water of life, the water that makes possible a different quality of life, the water which wells up into eternal life, and that water was available to the Samaritan woman, as little as she may have understood. Can it also be available to us? "The hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth." And now is. That now is the now in which we, as well as the Evangelist, live. The hour has come, it is present with us. Here we are at worship. Can this be what John is about? What Jesus means? It's all too easy to say, of course, this is what Jesus means. Christ is the answer, whatever the question. Christ is available to us here today as we worship. It's all too easy to say

that, but it's not, in principle, wrong to say that. John the Evangelist speaks as one who knows Christ. Whether he was an eyewitness and disciple, scholars may debate. What is not debatable is John's strong sense of the presence and the reality of Jesus Christ. "Do you believe because you have seen? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." Those who have not seen and yet believe know Christ through tradition and through eyewitness, that's true. But they also know him in worship. What John says about Jesus and in the name of Jesus is inconceivable apart from a worshiping community. And John is one of those who worships in Spirit and in truth. Are we? Yes, we may be. No, I'd go farther than that. Yes, we are such a community. Our worship does not depend on pious, or good feeling, or even upon our liturgy. It depends, in the first instance, on our act, our response of faith, however questioning in coming here, in gathering in the name of Jesus. Our being in this place is a significant response to the word from John, that God seeks those who will worship him in Spirit and in truth. Even in this predominantly Protestant setting, perhaps particularly in this predominantly Protestant setting, the significance of our gathering for worship needs to be underscored. That we are here is cause for reassurance and ought to raise high expectations. Therefore, in conclusion, it is good and fitting that this congregation should be concerned with how, and under what conditions, we worship. Worship is at the basis of what we say and do as Christians. Then ought we to spend \$24,000 for altar pieces? Or should we spend a lot more to air-condition this place? If you'd been here on that warm August morning some years ago when four chapters of John were read, you might agree that we should spend that money to air-condition this place, but seriously, we can certainly worship truly without either and maybe we should. New Testament Christians could not afford such tokens of affluence, but then again, New Testament Christians could not afford a chapel like this. There's a sense in which we have already decided, that is, the community has decided historically and, in principle, about the character of this place of worship. How we appoint and furnish it is a matter of serious practical and ethical importance, as well as taste. But unless we forgo the building and the use of houses of worship such as this, the answer to these and related questions is not immediately obvious. In fact, John gives us no explicit guidance and I don't propose to make a judgment this morning. Such decisions require the illumination of all the relevant facts and the considered judgment of the community. They're serious business. Whether and how we worship really is important. The water of life, about which Jesus speaks, is the meaning and the fulfillment that he gives to life. He is not, or is obviously not, the only source of meaning or apparent meaning. That is, people draw meaning and fulfillment of different sorts from different sources. But if Jesus is anything, he is the source of meaning and fulfillment for those whose other sources have run dry and that, sooner or later, is all of us. As important as our encounters with our fellow human beings may be, in revealing our true disposition toward Jesus, and they are very important, that is not all there is. The worship that we render, whether in community or alone, is the touchstone of our participation in Christ and in just that sense, it becomes the channel through which the living water comes to us. So be it. Amen. (somber organ music) (choir faintly singing) (somber organ music)

- Let us affirm what we believe. We believe in God who has created, and is creating, who has come in 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, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God. The Lord be with you.

- The Lord be with you.

- Let us pray. Let us pray for the Church Universal that she may be the true and spiritual servant of her Lord. And for this chapel, that it may always be the true and faithful servant of Christ's Church. Let us pray for the infirmed, those whom each of us know by name, and those whom we all know in spirit, that they may find relief from their suffering and release from their affliction. Let us pray for the poor whom Christ has named the children of God, that they may find comfort from their physical distress and consolation from their spiritual anguish. And let us pray for ourselves who are rich, that we may turn from the impossibility of passing through the needle's eye and seek Christ's kingdom among the least of his children. Let us pray that we who are Christ's Church may be the servants to the infirmed, the bearers of good news to the poor, that we may love as Christ has loved us. Let us pray for this nation, that it may truly be one nation under God and that we, and our leadership, may never confuse our obedience to our Lord with our loyalty to country. In these troubled times, may we not sacrifice the needs of the infirmed and the poor for the sake of social and economic advantage. In these confused times, may we cease the insanity of capital murder under the guise of just punishment and a search for social stability. In these frightening times, may we escape the terror of passion and brutality. Pray especially for frightened children and bereaved parents in Atlanta, Georgia. Pray especially for the growing company of hostages who are the senseless victims of arrogance and extremism. Pray especially for the masses of El Salvador, caught between oppressions, and longing only for life and peace. Let us pray for this university that she may teach the truth and that she may be the true and faithful steward to that one Spirit who is the way, the truth, and the life. Let us pray the prayer that our Lord has taught us to pray. 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 and the power and the glory, forever. Amen. (somber bell music) (paper rustling) (bright bell music) (grand organ music) Oh, Lord our God, receive our praises and prayers and these, our offerings, which we present before thee. And with them, ourselves, our souls and our bodies, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to thee through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (grand organ music) (choir faintly singing) (grand organ music) The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of Christ Jesus. And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. Amen. (joyful organ music) (joyful bell music) (congregation applauding) (muffled speaking)