

- Sunday worship service, February 10th, 1980, Duke Chapel. (organ music) (organ music) (choir singing)
(organ music)

- Grace, mercy and peace be unto you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our Heavenly Father to set forth His praise, to hear His Holy word, and to ask for ourselves and on behalf of others those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation and so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship Him, let us with penitent and obedient hearts, confess our sins that we may obtain forgiveness by His infinite goodness and mercy. Let us be seated and let us pray. Hear us, oh God, as we confess before you and in the presence of one another for the harsh words we speak to our friends, forgive us, oh Lord, for the resentment and bitterness we hold against those close to us. Forgive us, oh Lord, for the ungrateful way we show our disrespect of others. Forgive us, oh Lord, for the smug selfishness we feel toward the hunger of countless others everyday. Forgive us, oh Lord, for our eagerness to complain and to criticize other people. Forgive us, oh Lord, for our stubborn refusal to accept other persons who are different from us. Forgive us, oh Lord. Almighty God have mercy on you. Forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ. Strengthen you in all goodness and by the power of the Holy Spirit, keep you in eternal life both now and forevermore. Amen. Let us give thanks for God is merciful and God's presence is ever with us. Thanks be to--
(audience praying aloud) Amen.

- Let us pray. Prepare our hearts, oh Lord, to accept your word. Silencing us any voice but your own. That hearing, we may also obey your will. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. The Old Testament lesson is from the sixth chapter of Isaiah, verses one through eight. "In the year that King Uzziah died, "I saw the Lord sitting upon the throne high and lifted up "and his train filled the temple. "Above him stood the seraphim, each had six wings. "With two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, "and with two he flew." And one called to another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. "The whole Earth is full of His glory "and the foundations of the threshold shook "at the voice of Him who called "and the house was filled with smoke." And I said, "Woe is me, for I am lost "for I am a man of unclean lips "and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. "For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. "Then flew one of the seraphim to me, "having in his hand a burning coal "which he had taken with tongs from the altar, "and he touched my mouth and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips. "Your guilt is taken away and your sin forgiven. "And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "whom shall I send and who will go for us? "Then I said, "Here am I, sinned me." The epistle lesson is from the 15th chapter of First Corinthians verses one through 11. Now I would remind you brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel which you received. In which you stand, by which you are saved if you hold it fast unless you believed in vain for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received; that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then He appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James and then to all the Apostles. Last of all,

as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me for I am the least of the Apostles unfit to be called an Apostle because I persecuted the Church of God. But, by the grace of God I am what I am and His grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them. Though it was not I, but the grace of God, which is with me. Whether than it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. Here ends the reading from the epistle. Amen. (solemn music) (soprano singing opera) (choir singing)

- Will the congregation please stand for the reading of the Gospel word? The gospel lesson is from the fifth chapter of Luke, verses one through 11. While the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, He was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret and He saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked Him to put out a little from the land, and He sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when He had ceased speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night "and took nothing, but at your word, "I will let down the nets." And when they had done this they enclosed a great shoal of fish and as their nets were breaking, they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats so that they began to sink, but when Simon Peters saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, oh Lord." For he was astonished in all that were with Him at the catch of fish, which they had taken and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon, and Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid, henceforth you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him. All praise and glory be to God. Amen. (organ music) (choir singing)

- Good morning. What a beautiful, beautiful sight it was this morning. But how surprised I am to see you here this morning. It is a privilege even on such maybe especially, on such a beautiful day as this to gather in this place to worship God. Let us pray. Now, oh Lord, may the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Thy sight. Amen. Rudolf Otto in his book *The Idea of the Holy*, in a chapter entitled, "Mysterium Tremendum" writes of what I would like to preach about this morning. He says, "Let us consider the deepest "and most fundamental element in all strong "and sincerely felt religious emotion. "We find something for which there "is only one appropriate expression "and that expression is mysterium tremendum. "The feeling of it may at times come sweeping "like a gentle tide, it may pass over into a more set "and lasting attitude of the soul "continuing as it were thrillingly vibrant "and resonate until it lasts it dies away "and the soul resumes its mood of everyday experience. "It may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths "of the soul with spasms and convulsions "or lead to the strangest excitements "to intoxicated frenzy to transport and to ecstasy. "It may become the hushed, trembling, "and speechless humility of the creature "in the presence of what or whom. "In the presence of that which is a mystery. "Inexpressible and above all creatures "this God of Isaiah in the temple really is holy other." As Reinhold Niebuhr says, "The penumbra of mystery, "this God really is numinous, all filling, overpowering, "really is mysterium tremendum." Really is, as Isaiah recorded it, "high and lifted up "with a train that fills the whole temple. "This God really is holy, holy, holy." The whole Earth indeed surely is full of this God's glory. No wonder that the foundations of the threshold shook at the voice of this God. No wonder the house was filled with smoke. No wonder Isaiah cried, "Woe is me, for I am lost. "For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell "in the midst of a people of unclean lips. "For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Then flew one of the seraphim

to me, having in His hand a burning coal which He had taken with tongs from the altar and He touched my mouth and said, "Behold this has touched your lips. "Your guilt is taken away and your sin is forgiven." Then I heard the voice of the Almighty saying, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I, send me." Often we talk of this experience as God's call to Isaiah. Or as Isaiah's call from God. It seems to me that such thinking as this sees this particular experience of Isaiah really upside down for if we think of this as God's call to Isaiah or as Isaiah's call from God, then we may become very, very passive and wait, and wait, and wait, and feel quite comfortable that we are waiting for God to call us. And feel that when we hear God call us, when that happens then we will respond, but meanwhile we sit and wait, but I don't believe that this is the way to read this experience nor do I believe, that this is the way we encounter the Lord God Almighty. I read this not as God's call to Isaiah, but as Isaiah's response to the presence of the Almighty God. This means then I believe that there is an always present, presentness about the presence of God. There is no special time or place or way or voice in which God calls for God always is. That means that I believe that God is always calling. There is no time when God is not calling you or me. Well you see, at least as I understand it, from what Isaiah tells us about his experience, nothing really changed in the temple. I would almost bet you that things in the temple were on that particular day just the way they had been the day before and just the way they were to be the day after. All of the outward appearance and all the effects of the temple were just as they had been. The change, you see, was in Isaiah, in Isaiah's sensitivities and in his sensibilities. The change was in Isaiah's inner and outer self. Not in God, or God's presence, or God's appearance, or God's calling. This means then, that the responsibility for encounter with the Lord God Almighty rests not on God, but it rests on you and me. What happens between God and us really does depend on us. That is why Dr. George Buttrick once told his Memorial Church at Harvard University congregation, "You had better be careful," he said, "For you may be apprehended by that for which you are ready "to be apprehended." How and when and where we see God really does depend on our readiness on what we are looking for, on what we hoped to see, on what indeed we are ready to see. I believe that life really is like Elizabeth Barrett Browning described it in her lines in book seven of Aurora Leigh. You remember? "Earth's crammed with heaven," she writes, "and every common bush of fire with God "but only He who sees takes off His shoes. "The rest sit 'round and pluck blackberries." Most of us sit 'round plucking blackberries and waiting for God and yet every common bush, every common experience, every common moment may become a fire with God, if only. This particular day, Isaiah went again into the temple. He went, we believe, as he regularly did, but this time he went ready, sensitive, awake, receptive, responsive. This time he went ready to express himself to acknowledge who he was to speak out, to accept, to hear and ready to make a commitment to God. Look for me, if you will, at Isaiah's experience for just a moment. Unamuno once said that, "the temple is where we all go "to weep in common." Well, the temple, this temple, other temples are that, places where we all gather to weep in common. But the temple is also that place where we go to experience the Lord God Almighty. In these verses we have an authentic pattern, a genuine paradigm for worship if you will for individual worship and for corporate worship. One moves into the temple, into the presence of Almighty God first of all acknowledging and praising God. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. And once one acknowledges who God is and praises God, one then becomes aware of who one is and acknowledges who one is. One then confesses one's sin. One then receives and acknowledges and accepts the grace of God. One then hopefully acknowledges and accepts and appropriates God's claim upon one's life and then the final act of worship, individual or corporate is the act of committing one's life to God. Here am I, send me. So this pattern of worship, which Isaiah set for us. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. I don't know about you,

but I don't often become fully aware of who God is. Even when I'm trying awfully hard to think about God, to meditate upon God, to understand something of who God is and what God is all about. I very, very rarely become aware of who God really is. I'm not sure that I ever have fully understood who God is, but when I get just a glimpse of that, I know that the Lord God really is Almighty, friends. He is so omnipotent and so omniscient that I have the same feeling that our Hebrew brothers and sisters had long ago when they wouldn't even dare name the name of the Lord God Almighty. So it is right when we come into God's presence and when we become aware that God's presence really is there, wherever there is, as Isaiah here says here, "We then sing holy, holy, holy, "Lord God Almighty." But once Isaiah saw and admitted who God was, and once we see and admit who God is then the next step it seems to me is inevitable and that is that we admit our humanness, our sin, our lostness, our creatureliness, our uncleanness to use Isaiah's word. Seeing God high and lifted up, we know that not only are we lost and unclean, but we dwell in the midst of a people who also are unclean. Dolly Arroyo writing in a recent issue of Sojourner's Magazine said as a word of confession, "To come before God empty is difficult. "Well, it seems to me that to come before God empty "or full or any way at all is often difficult. "It's hard to admit who we are. "It's hard to say, I am sinner." Have you ever tried that? Have you ever said that? Out loud? To yourself? To God? I am sinner. Maybe we'll try that for a moment. Would you follow me and say after me? We'll use the words of Isaiah and that might make it a little easier for us to say, huh? Will you repeat then after me? Woe is me. You may say I am a man or I am a woman, but I am a man or woman of unclean lips. It's a little bit hard to say, isn't it? I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. That's a little easier to say, isn't it? How about trying to say what Peter did? In the gospel lesson which was read. Peter upon becoming aware of who the Christ was fell on his knees and said, "I am a sinful man, oh Lord." Paul in his writing, which was read as one of the lessons for this morning said, "I am the least of all of the Apostles." It really is kind of hard to admit who we are, isn't it? Woe is me. I am lost or I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. I don't know how hard it is for you to say. I have some feeling of how hard it is for me to say. But I want to proclaim this morning that if I understand this particular word of God at all, I believe one of the things that this passage in Isaiah is saying is that when we do say, when we are able to say woe is me, for I am a person of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Indeed I am lost, then God's grace can and will come to us. It may not be a seraphim taking a hot coal from the altar and coming and touching our mouths, and saying that our lips are made clean, but I want to proclaim this morning that I do believe that as you and I say, "yes, I am sinner." God's grace then can come to us and say to us, "Your guilt is taken away, "your sin is forgiven." that's part of what happened to Isaiah here. In a magnificent little short story of his entitled, A Dream of a Ridiculous Man, Dostoyevsky writes, "Of just such a moment as this, "just such a moment as when we behold the glory "and experience God's grace and what grace it really is." He writes, "For I have beheld the truth. "I will not and I cannot believe that evil "is the normal condition among men, "and yet all of my friends laugh at this faith of mine, "but how can I help believing it, "for I have beheld it and the living image of it "has filled my soul forever." "The living image of this experience of the grace of God "has filled my soul forever." See God, see oneself? Feel the touch of God's grace and then what? God's call and God's claim then come to us. Is it not that God's call is also God's grace and that as God does call us, God gives to us also? Is it not as Archbishop William Temple said, "Every revelation of God is a demand from God?" Or as Martin Buber writes in his classic theological triotus, I and thou, "Every revelation of God "is a call and a commission." This revelation of God, this demand, this call, this commission is a unique act of God's grace or as John Bailey tells us, "It is a demand "that we should accept a gift." What God asks of us is

not that we should do any thing for ourselves, but that we should allow all to be done for us by Him. Whom shall I send and who will go for us? And then I said, "Here am I, send me." This weekend, as many of you know, has been a very special weekend at Duke. For almost a year now at the initiative and the suggestion and the prodding of a number of students, many students, administrators, faculty and alumni have been planning for a conference on career choices. Students have been eager and excited. Faculty and staff have helped and supported. Alumni have cooperated to come back home to share some experiences, to give advice and counsel and guidance and to listen while students try to weigh, evaluate, understand, and determine what they will do career-wise with their lives. It seems to me that as I have heard of what has been going on since late Friday evening, and in spite of the weather it has been a very productive weekend. And those of us now at Duke are grateful to the alumni who have been most responsive and helpful. I commend those students who have worked and planned and carried out a most important program, a most important program because what is there more important than deciding what one is going to do with one's life? Your life or my life or all the rest of our lives. What will we do with the rest of it? The rest of our lives. The question that was put to Isaiah in the temple is, "is not a once for all or a once in a lifetime question "that we answer and then forget about." The question it seems to me comes to us over and over and over again as long as we live. Whom shall I send the word came and who will go for us? God is not just asking. Not at all, friends. God is not just asking who, whom shall I send and who will go for us as a pastor, or a priest, or a minister, or a Chaplain, or a religious. No, not at all. God is asking who is there? Who will go and live for me? Wherever you go and whatever you do, whom shall I send and who will go for us? Who will give one's life for me or to me? Or who will give one's life to others? Who will give one's life to obey, to serve, to love in my name? "Whom shall I send," the word says. Who will go for us? Will you? Will you? Will I? Will we? Blaise Pascal, the French philosopher scientist had an experience that changed the course of his life. Pascal wrote out that experience and he sewed it onto his clothes. The patch with this experience described in his own words was found on his body when he died nine years after he had had the experience. The reading on the patch goes this way, "The year of the Lord 1654, Monday, 23 November. "From about half past ten in the evening, "until about half past 12 at night, "fire, God, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob. "Certainty, joy, peace. "God of Jesus Christ. "God is found along the ways that are taught in the gospel. "Tears of joy," he wrote. "for I had parted from Him. "Let me never be separated from Him. "Surrender to Jesus Christ." It seems to me that surrender is the word, my friends. Surrender. Whom shall I send and who will go for us? What will you do with the rest of your life? Amen. (organ playing)

- In response to the word of God read, preached and heard, 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 to 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.

- And also with you.

- Let us be seated and let us pray. Oh God, we are conscious especially this morning of the way in which you have filled the world with beauty and on this spectacular day, we give thanks to you. Open our eyes to

behold your gracious hand in all your works that rejoicing in your whole creation we may learn to serve you with gladness for the sake of Him through whom all things were made. Jesus Christ, our Lord. Let us pray on this day for peace among the nations. Almighty God, our heavenly Father, guide the nations of the world into the way of justice and truth. In these troublous times establish among them that peace which is the fruit of righteous that they may become the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and let us pray this morning for the President of the United States and for all our leaders. Oh Lord God whose glory is in all the world, we commend our nation to your merciful care that being guided by your providence, we may dwell secure in your peace. Grant to the President of the United States and all of our leaders, those in authority throughout the world wisdom and strength to know and to do your will. Fill them with the love of truth and righteousness and make them ever mindful of their calling to serve us in your fear through Jesus Christ our Lord. And let us pray this day for schools and colleges in our land. Oh, eternal God bless all schools, colleges and universities and especially our own university that they may be lively centers for sound learning, new discovery and the pursuit of wisdom. Grant to those of us who teach and those who learn that we may find you in the source of all truth. And thus come to know Jesus Christ our Lord. And let us remember this day in prayer, those who do not have all the benefits that we gathered here this day do have. Look with pity, oh God, upon the people in this land who live with injustice, terror, disease and death as their constant companions. Have mercy upon us, help us to eliminate our cruelty to these our neighbors, strengthen those who spend their lives, establishing equal protection of the law and equal opportunities for all and grant that every one of us may enjoy a fair portion of the riches of this land. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. We give thanks, oh God, for this congregation. For the sense of excitement that is ours to be here in worship on this day. The fact that it is a snowy day provides us with greater anticipation and a sense of joy in coming together. This is Sunday and we are reminded but by the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ on the first day of the week. You, oh God, conquered sin, put death to flight and gave us the hope of everlasting life. Redeem all our days by this victory, forgive our sins, banish our fears, and let us praise you and do your will. All of these prayers we make in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught us to pray together. 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 and ever. Amen. Let us remember now as we come to that period of our service of response and offering that by our very presence here, this day, we have offered ourselves to God, and we give thanks and rejoice for this great witness of God's presence among us in this congregation on this day and let us remember too that by bringing gifts of money, our tithes, and our offerings, we are in fact, symbolizing ourselves and all that we are in response to God's graciousness unto us. Let us offer ourselves to God. (organ playing) (choir singing)

- And now unto God's gracious mercy and protection, we commit you and the blessing of God Almighty. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore. Amen. (choir singing)