

...members of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel. Of this Gospel I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given. To preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things. Here ends the reading of the epistle. Amen. This has been an unusual week in my life, as I'm sure it has been an unusual week in the life of many who have gathered here together this day. So deeply do I feel about that which has brought us together and that which we have come to do that nothing else very much has been on my mind. I have had an unusual spiritual exercise. For I have taken the holy Scriptures and have gone through from the beginning to the end and have read the story of the calling of every major figure that I know in the Old and New Testaments. But so deeply do I believe in my own life that there is something mysterious about that which brings us together this morning that I felt I simply needed to entitle the homily "Called." I read the calling of the Old Testament prophets and I read the calling of the apostles of the New and I walked along the road to Damascus with Saul as he heard himself changed into Paul. Out of all of that, I've come with a strange text from the ancient book of Jonah, the third chapter and the second verse. "Then the Word of the Lord came to Jonah saying 'Arise and go to Nineveh, that great city'" and proclaim to it the message that I will give you." And I found myself doing what no good professor of homiletics would overly recommend. I found myself also almost paraphrasing it and saying "and then the Word of the Lord came to William Willimon and saying 'Arise and go'" to Duke, that great university" and proclaim to it the message that I will give you." My personal appreciation for the honor of being here is so deep and so great that I came into the chapel alone and sat for a while. So deeply do I feel about the place of the chapel on this campus that I have gone back to my own student days this week and have called the roll of ministers that were called to be ministers to this university and to speak here in this sanctuary of God. Their names may not be familiar to me, their names are household to me. Albert Russel, Frank Hickman, Harold Bosley, Marty Jones, Harvey Floyd, James T. Clellan, Howard Wilkinson, Robert T Young, Charlene Camera, William Henry Willimon. All called, all stood in the holy place and announced to the university some things that needed to be announced and said to the university some things that needed to be said. And reminded all of us of some things that we ought not to forget. Time would not allow it, nor would I take advantage of it, to complete a list of things that I don't want to forget, and which I that the minister to the university will constantly hold up for me, as I'm sure you want him to hold up for you. One of them would be the reality of God. We live in a kind of a strange day in the twentieth century, when even the reality of God is being now brought into question. I remember sending a summer in Oxford some years ago, divided a little between study and some preaching. I read in the Oxford Press that there was to be a debate in the hall one night, where debates are prone to be had. The query of the debate was, is there or is there not a God? I was preaching at a little church called Rose Hill in Oxford that night, and I wanted so desperately to be away so that I could go and find out how God made out. Somewhere in the archives of all of the things you're going to look at when you retire, I have a copy of the Oxford Press for that day that had a rather unusual headline about it. The headline of the Oxford paper simply says, "God Loses Oxford by Nine Votes." The amazing thing about it is that it isn't really God who loses. Tolstoy was right, God is he without whom I cannot live.

God is not a matter of choice, he's a matter of necessity. We live in a world in which we believe we can do as we please. We can't do as we please. When we do as we please, we usually make a mess of life. In the beginning, God. It is the great hypothesis upon which a religious man builds his life, a religious woman builds her life. Explain God? On a university campus, do we not take all things apart in order to put all things back together in a finer fashion? I can't explain God, but by the same token, I can't explain the wind. Nor am I able to explain love. Nor can I explain faith. Nor hardly any other great principle upon which my life is based, as well as yours. Describe God? Generation ago a very distinguished Episcopal clergyman in America by the name of Bernard Iddings Bell wrote a very lovely book entitled "Your God is Too Small." If he can be confined to a human description, there is a smallness about him that cannot cope with our day. When I was a young man, one of the heroes in America was a man by the name of Richard Evelyn Byrd. Having lived in Virginia, I admire him more now than I ever had admired him before. Admiral Byrd wrote a little book entitled, "Alone" when he was walking across the frozen regions of the deep south. There in the nothingness of life, he wrote these words. "The conviction came to me that the rhythm was too orderly. "It was too harmonious, it was too perfect, "to be a product of blind chance. "There must be a purpose in the whole "and that man was a part of that whole "and not an accidental offshoot." I believe that. And I want to be reminded of it again and again and again. One of the highlights of my life as a young minister was to do a speaking tour with a man whose name was magic around America in his day. His name was Eddie Rickenbacker. He came to our town to do a series of meetings for the Rotary Club and I was asked to go along and to speak on the same program. It was immediately after he had gone down in the Pacific and for almost three weeks, the name of Rickenbacker was lost in the world. Then one day he was spotted in his raft. And Eddie Rickenbacker and Whittaker survived. I remember asking him, even as a young man, this man whose name was known every place, "What enabled you to continue? "What kept you alive?" "Whittaker kept me alive," Mr. Rickenbacker said. "I never could have died with Whittaker there." I said, "What did Whittaker do that kept you alive?" He kept saying to me, "Boss "I can't get away from the feeling that "there are three of us." The feeling that there are three of us kept us alive. So does it yet. The first class I had in theological school, now almost 50 years ago, was a class entitled Great Men of the Christian Church taught by the late Bishop Paul Neff Garber. It had to do with the current and the contemporary leaders of the Protestant, well not Protestant, and Catholic church in America. One of those men was a man by the name of Daniel Poling, who was the minister of a great Baptist church in the city of Philadelphia. He had a son named Clark who was a divinity student at Yale University. Those in my generation remember a ship that was called the S.S. Dorchester. Clark Poling was the chaplain. It went across the North Atlantic in the days when going across the North Atlantic was desperately dangerous. He decided the last thing he wanted to do before he left these shores to go across the North Atlantic where the torpedoes and the submarines were every place, was to call on his father in Philadelphia. Daniel Poling said that the last words Clark ever said to him, for if you remember, he did not make it across the North Atlantic, and the Dorchester was sunk. From his own back, he took the lifebelt and gave it to another man who had the privilege of living. "The last words," said Daniel Poling, "that my son "ever said to me was, 'If it turns out to be a blind alley "'and I meet one other man "'then there will be three of us.'" I cannot live without that. This is the building that is set aside, even with the founder of the university, to remind us of some things that we ought not to forget. Remind me of the reality of God. I read the calling of Isaiah and those magnificent chapters. Lines in the sixth chapter of Isaiah. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, "high and holy and lifted up "and the temple was filled with his glory." It may never happen here, but it could. Why not? I not only wanna be

reminded of the reality of God. I wanted to be reminded of the relevance of Christ. "Do you understand Einstein?" someone asked Bertrand Russell. "Do you agree with him?" "My answer is no to the first question "and yes to the second," said Mr. Russell. When I look at Jesus, I have to admit there is much in him that is beyond me. His mystery and his greatness have grown on me with the passing years, not in a vague sort of a way, never. He is as real as anything I know. I only find it difficult to say what he means. I find it hard to say what my wife means to me. But I also find it impossible to live without her. I cannot live without Jesus Christ. Soon we shall hear it from this very room, 20 centuries after his death. "There were in the same country, shepherds abiding "in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." The angels said, "Fear not." Don't get up so tight. I bring you good news. Good news that life has meaning. Good news that life has purpose. Good news that life has dignity. Good news that life has a tomorrow. 20 centuries after his life, a distinguished theologian, no. A distinguished sociology, the head of the department at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina wrote a monumental book on sociology and didn't know what to call it. So he simply entitled it, "The World's Need for Christ." I charged the minister to the university to remind us of the relevance of Christ, or as the radio evangelists would put it, the now-ness of Jesus. Then I would remind them in the third place to remind us of the reality of the kingdom of God. Dr. Brighman reminded us a generation ago that the central chord of Jesus' teaching had to do with the kingdom of God, the realm of God. Put it in the Korean Creed, in the very book out of which you sang. We believe in the kingdom of God as the divine rule in human society and in the basic kinship of all people. Why not? We believe in the Holy Spirit, God present with us, for guidance, for comfort, and for strength. Without that conviction I would not face tomorrow. For when tomorrow comes in some strange and mysterious manner, he will already have been there. I read, as a gift of a friend, this week a lovely little book written by a man named John C. Haughey entitled "The Conspiracy of God." "The Holy Spirit is," he says, "and ever shall remain "the very soul of the Church." A Christianity that forgets or construes as old fashioned the active and activating presence of the Holy Spirit will be a truncated Christianity. I would be so bold as to say to you that Christ is alive, not only in the magnificence of this chapel, but in the roar of Wade Stadium and Cameron's Indoors. So I have the feeling that we're on the threshold of a spiritual springtime in the church. We might even welcome with joy the old spirit who alone can renew at the depth of our need, the face of the Church and the face of the world. Why not? So I am a citizen of the kingdom. I did not earn it. It was given to me. It is God's gift to me. Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. But I maintain and shall always hold that citizenship in the kingdom offers not only privilege, without which life offers no peace, but it offers responsibility and obligations, both personal and social. Without which, life offers no meaning. In the next two weeks I will attend the 50th anniversary of my undergraduate graduating class in a little school ran by the Dutch Reform Church in my hometown. I go back with an unusual degree of hesitancy. I just am not anticipating how the rest of the classmates have not remained the same as have I. But we shall talk again about the things we talked about in school and the things we used to do. Every now and again we shall have a, we shall have a miniature bull session, as once we had in its dormitories. I remember one, one night. The Dean of our little school was a man named A.K. Faust, a German. The only American ever to be decorated with the honor of the Royal Micarta. When he walked across the campus, everybody became almost quiet because of the presence of his witness. One night in a usual boys' dormitory where we were having the usual conversations, and there really are only two things you discuss in a boys' dormitory. And religion is the other one. Somebody said, "What about ol' A.K.?" Which was a title of love. "What about him?" somebody says. "The thing that amazes me about ol' A.K. is "he acts as if the

kingdom has already come." Another student spoke up and said, "For him, it has." Remind us, dear Will, remind us constantly not only of who we are, but of who, in God's grace, we ought to be. So the Word of the Lord came to Will, saying, "Arise and go to Duke, that great university "and preach unto it the preaching that I will give thee." In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Let us unite as we affirm our faith. I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into Hell. The third day, he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty. From this he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe that the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen. (drums rolling) (brassy fanfare) ♪ Rejoice the Lord is King ♪ ♪ Your Lord and King adore ♪ ♪ Rejoice give thanks and sing ♪ ♪ And triumph evermore ♪ ♪ Lift up your heart lift up your voice ♪ ♪ Rejoice again I say rejoice ♪ ♪ Jesus the Savior reigns ♪ ♪ The God of truth and love ♪ ♪ When He had purged our stains ♪ ♪ He took His seat above ♪ ♪ Lift up your heart lift up your voice ♪ ♪ Rejoice again I say rejoice ♪ Dear friends, today we welcome William H. Willimon, who has been appointed to serve as minister to Duke University. Will, you have committed yourself to live among us as a bearer of the word of God, minister of the sacraments, and sustainer of the love, order, and discipleship of the people of God who gather in this chapel. Today I reaffirm this commitment in the presence of this congregation. As a people committed to participate in the ministries of the church by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, and your service, will you who celebrate this new beginning support and uphold Will in these ministries? We are together ourselves and we reaffirm our commitment. Let us pray. Eternal God, strengthen and sustain us in our work together with Will as our minister. Give him and us patience, courage, and wisdom so to care for one another and challenge one another that together we may follow Jesus Christ, living together in love and offering our gifts and talents in your service through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Will, accept these keys to the chapel and continue its ministry as a place of beauty, a haven of hope, and Oh, God. A sign of God's. A sign of God's presence in this university. Amen. Will, accept this Bible and be among us as one who proclaims the Word. Amen. Will, take this water and use it to baptize new Christians in this place. Amen. Will, take this cup and keep us in communion with Christ and his Church. Amen. Will, receive this hymnal and guide us in our prayer and praise. Amen. Will, receive this stole and shepherd us as a pastor. Amen. Will, accept this banner, which bears the symbol of Duke campus ministry and support us in our ecumenical worship, service, and fellowship. Amen. Will, receive this globe and lead us in our mission to the community and the world. Amen. Let us pray. Lord God, bless the ministries of this chapel. We thank you for the variety of gifts you have bestowed upon us. Draw us together in one spirit that we may use our various gifts as members of one body. May your Word be proclaimed with faithfulness and may we be doers of your Word and not hearers only. May be one in service to others and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, amen. The peace of the Lord is always with you. And also with you. On behalf of the University, I welcome you as minister to Duke University. And now as a forgiven and reconciled people let us offer ourselves and our gifts to God. (drum and brass fanfare) (choir singing in Latin) ("Doxology") ♪ Praise God from whom all blessings flow ♪ ♪ Praise him all creatures here below ♪ ♪ Alleluia alleluia ♪ ♪ Praise Him above ye heavenly host ♪ ♪ Praise Father Son and Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Alleluia alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ For all the blessings of this life, Oh God, for tradition, for families an friends, for you Church, for your Word, which challenges us, and for opportunities to use our gifts for your glory, we give thanks. Accept these, our gifts, and use them for your

work. 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, amen. (organ music) ♪ ♪ For all the saints who from their labors rest ♪ ♪ Who Thee by faith before the world confessed ♪ ♪ Thy name O Jesus be forever blessed ♪ ♪ Alleluia Alleluia ♪ ♪ Thou was their Rock their Fortress and their Might ♪ ♪ Thou Lord their Captain in the well-fought fight ♪ ♪ Thou in the darkness drear their one true Light ♪ ♪ Alleluia Alleluia ♪ ♪ O may your soldiers faithful true and bold ♪ ♪ Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old ♪ ♪ And win with them the victor's crown of gold ♪ ♪ Alleluia Alleluia ♪ ♪ O blessed communion fellowship divine ♪ ♪ We feebly struggle they in glory shine ♪ ♪ Yet all are one within your great design ♪ ♪ Alleluia Alleluia ♪ ♪ And when the strife is fierce the warfare long ♪ ♪ Steals on the ear the distant triumph song ♪ ♪ And hearts are brave again and arms are strong ♪ ♪ Alleluia Alleluia ♪ ♪ From earth's wide bounds from ocean's farthest coast ♪ ♪ Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host ♪ ♪ Singing to Father Son and Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Alleluia Alleluia ♪ Now may the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and always. ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (organ music) (crowd chattering)