

(peaceful organ music) (vibrant organ music) (peaceful solo vocal music) (harmonious choral music)  
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- We welcome you to this service of worship. Particularly we welcome those alumni who are here for the Medical Alumni Weekend. We also welcome our guest conductor of the Duke Chapel Choir today, Doctor Willis Bodine from the University of Florida, who's visiting us today in the absence of Professor Rick Fountain, who has returned to Chicago to conduct in a choral festival there. Remind the congregation that a series of educational activities is being planned throughout the Sundays in Advent at 9:45. They're listed in the Bulletin. If you're a regular attender of Duke Chapel, you may be interested in participating in some of these classes sponsored by the congregation at Duke Chapel. We also welcome those of you who worship with us through the closed circuit television of Duke University, those of you who are in Duke Hospitals. And now, let us continue our worship on this day of Christ the King. (peaceful organ music) (harmonious organ and choral music) (dramatic organ music) (harmonious organ and choral music)

- Almighty and everlasting God, who's will it is to restore all things and thy well beloved son, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under His most gracious rule. Who liveth and reineth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever, amen.

- Let us pray.

Congregation: Open our hearts and minds, oh God, by the power of your Holy Spirit, so that as the Word is read and proclaimed, we might hear with joy what you say to us this day, amen.

- The first lesson is taken from Jeremiah. Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch. And he shall reign up as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days, Judea will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely, and this is the name by which he will be called: The Lord is our righteousness. This ends the reading of the first lesson.

- Please stand for the reading of the Salter. The Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty.

Congregation: The Lord is robed; he is burdened with strength.

- Yea the world is established.

Congregation: It shall never be moved.

- Thy throne is established from of old.

Congregation: Thou art everlasting.

- The floods have lifted up, oh, Lord. The floods have lifted up their voice.

Congregation: The floods lift up their roaring.

- Mightier than the thunders of many waters. Mightier than the waves of the sea.

Congregation: The Lord on high is mighty.

- Thy decrees are very sure.

Congregation: Holiness befits thy house, oh, Lord, forevermore. (peaceful organ music) (harmonious organ and choral music)

- The second lesson is taken from the Revelation to John: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was, and who is to come. And from the seven spirits who are before his throne. And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us a kingdom, priest to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever, amen. Behold he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him. Everyone who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so, amen. I am the alpha and the omega, says the Lord, God, who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty. This ends the reading of the second lesson. (peaceful organ music) (vibrant orchestral music) (harmonious orchestral and choral music)

- Let us stand for the reading of the Gospel. The Gospel for Christ the king is from the Gospel of John: Pilate entered the Praetorium, again, and he called Jesus, and he said to him, "Are you king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord? "Or did others say it to you about me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? "Your own nation and chief priest "have handed you over to me. "What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingship is not of this world. "If my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight "that I might not be handed over to the Jews. "But my kingship is not from this world." Pilate said to him, "So, you're king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am king. "For this I was born. "And for this I have come into the world "to bear witness to the truth. "Everyone who is of the truth "hears my voice." Here ends the lesson. (peaceful organ music) (harmonious organ and choral music) Let's talk politics. Do I detect a groan in the congregation? Say that you're sick of politics; sick of Republicans; sick of Democrats. Well I have a political proposal for you. I couldn't present it during the heat of the campaign, but here we stand on the last Sunday of the Church year, the time is right. My proposal is this: What this country needs is Monarchy. That's right, a king. Think about it, and the problems which beset us are so great, so seemingly insoluble: Thinning ozone, crumbling cities, soaring National Debt. You've seen Presidents come, you've seen Presidents go. Do you really believe that a new administration can take matters in hand? Besides, say the

new President really does have a good idea, do you think Congress is gonna go along? On the other hand, would you think of what a king could do? I mean, a real king, not some polo-playing playboy who dabbles in architecture. But real royalty. Crowned the old-fashioned way by divine right rather than media hype. I realize I've got an uphill battle on this one. The notion of royalty does not come naturally to Americans. For we were born out of the idea that a modern nation does not need kings and queens. Democracy, we believe, is better than monarchy. The democratic supposition is that wisdom is quantitatively, rather than qualitatively derived, something on which nine out of 10 Americans can agree. Something a commodity, available to this creation called the common man. Truth determined by majority vote. In reality, as we have been reminded during the last election what democracy often boils down to is the influence of a lot of money, pressure from political pacts and special interest groups, a mess of caucuses, all managed by someone called a Madison Avenue image consultant, looking for the 10-second sound byte. But on the other hand, consider monarchy. You know, constitutional monarchies have an amazingly good track record. Why not let those rule who were born to rule? I know I never agreed with those people who said that George Bush would make a bad President, simply because he was a privileged aristocrat. I mean, privileged aristocrats have made the rest of us commoners, some pretty good leaders in the past; I'm thinking of the Roosevelts, Washington, Jefferson. I tell you, there is something to be said for rule by monarchy, by royalty. I suspect, though, that no Fergie and Di, no polo-playing kings or pocketbook clutching queens will move you. We can hardly afford a President, much less a king. You don't want a king. Yet the difficulty is that all of today's lessons agree, Jesus is a king. Jeremiah lifted up his sights out of the political mire of Israel of his day. Israel led by a bunch of inept shepherds, as Jeremiah calls them. And he prophesied, the days are coming when I will raise up for David a righteous branch. He shall reign as king and deal wisely and execute justice and righteousness. For Christians, this king is Jesus. Who in Revelations' words is Ruler of Kings on Earth. Of course, being a king really meant something in Jesus' day. A king, the most powerful human being on earth, a king was the very source of a nation's domestic tranquility and justice, the only means of securing order and peace. But as your preacher, the question I'm struggling with, you see, this morning is: Can King Jesus mean anything in our democratic day? Remember, you don't really believe that you need a king. You may be a Republican or a Democrat, but who is a monarchist? When we think of kings and queens today, we're apt not to think of omnipotence, but we're apt to think of Charles and Di. A pleasant woman with an omnipresent purse. We don't think of power, sovereignty when we think monarchy. The Dutch are fond of saying, whenever someone belittles someone else, well, trix ist nix. Beatrix, the Dutch Queen is also a nobody. In other words, we've done to kings and queens what we've done to every other source of authority in our lives. Everything has been rendered common, everyday, impotent, nothing, nobody, rules. Okay, you don't want a king, but the question is: Do you need a king? For if we ridicule modern royalty, consider how they ridiculed King Jesus. The setting of today's Gospel from John is Pilate's trial of Jesus. In the Praetorium, the head of the Roman occupation forces in Judea, Pilate, asked Jesus a political question: Are you king of the Jews? Are you king? I think he snickered when he asked it. A bedraggled, half-naked Jew standing before him, back still bloody from a nasty whipping. A group of soldiers had planted a crown of thorns and placed it on his head to ridicule him. Are you King? Now, Pilate's question to Jesus is preceded in John's Gospel by Annas' interrogation. Annas was High Priest, cousin to Caiaphas, who John says was High Priest in Israel for that year. The High Priest was supposed to be High Priest for life. You see what John is doing there? He was High Priest for that year. It's John's caustic comment on what the Romans had done to religious leaders in Jesus' day. Just let somebody be High Priest for that year. He really isn't a High Priest,

he's a quisling for the government, a lackey for the Roman overlords. They'd let him be priest just for that year. Back in the Praetorium, Pilate shows himself to be weak, indecisive little man. What good is a Roman governor if he can't keep these uppity Jews in their place? In contrast to Pilate, the prisoner Jesus is calm, self-assured, decisive, in control, while everybody else is rushing back and forth, checking with the mob outside, checking to see what's going on. "Are you king of the Jews?" Pilate asked in sarcasm. "Do you say that of your own accord?" Jesus asks, "Or has somebody else said it about me?" In other words, he asked Pilate, are you talking for yourself now, or are you just checking the public opinion polls again? To see what you're supposed to think. "So, you are really king?" asked Pilate. "You're the one who keeps saying I'm king," says Jesus. "My kingdom is not of this world," says Jesus. See, Pilate thinks he's in control. He keeps raving about power, but in reality he has very little of it. He thinks he's in charge, but obviously, this bedraggled Jew before him is in charge. When Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world," he isn't talking about heaven, about some other place in time. Rather, he means that now, his kingdom, unlike that of Pilate or Caiaphas or Annas. His kingdom is not dependent upon or grounded in the methods and means of Caesar's kingdom. Jesus calls the shots, not because he's got some certificate from Caesar in Rome, but because he is true royalty. Now, would you come with me outside from the Praetorium, outside in the courtyard where another trial is taking place. The trial of the lead Disciple, Peter. John devotes about as much space to the trial of Peter out in the courtyard by the maid, as he devotes to the trial of Jesus by Pilate in the Praetorium. Jesus is facing Pilate, the most powerful person in Judea, and he is in charge. Peter, on the other hand, is having a conversation with a serving woman out in the courtyard, and things are not going well in that trial at all. I mean, think about the power of that woman out in the courtyard. What was she doing out in the courtyard at three a.m. with a group of Roman soldiers? She wasn't a Red Cross woman handing out coffee and donuts. She was out there making a living. She was a woman of the night. A person of the world; she knew how the world works. "You were with him," she says. And Peter, the rock of the Church, the rock, before dawn will deny Jesus three times, "I never even knew him," he says. Here's a two-level drama, you see? A two-level trial: Inside Jesus is supposed to be on trial. But Jesus is asking the questions and putting Caesar on trial. Outside, the followers of Jesus, the Disciples, the Church, us, out in the darkness. We are being questioned by the world and we are literally falling apart. I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will scatter. Are you king? It's an important, fundamental question because you see, it's a question about sovereignty, it's a question about rule. Who is in charge? When the world is dark and falling apart and things are unglued. Who is in charge? You see, I'm betting that that is still the fundamental human question. I'm betting that that's your question. Who's in charge? The crowd answered, we've got no king but Caesar. Today that is still a very popular response. Politics. Politics has become our most socially acceptable form of transcendence. The answer to every human problem. We expect politics to make our world secure, to protect us, to give us safe streets and drug-free children. We have, it would seem, no means of securing our lives. We have no king, except Caesar. At the same time, witness our shock when we find out that those who we elect to lead us are really quite ordinary people. As we learned during the last Presidential campaign, our kings make gaffs and goofs and Cs in college. And who wants to be ruled by people who are just as ordinary as we are? Pilate, big powerful Pilate, is revealed to be a rather pitiful, inept little man, who can't even manage his own marriage, much less Israel. He thinks he's putting Jesus on trial, when in reality, Jesus has put Pilate and the whole Empire in the dock. It's enough when you see how puny are our politicians, how they look just like us, in other words. It's enough to make you wonder, who is in charge? I mean, you see, if you push the political question far enough, if you push the political question far

enough, before long, you're asking religious questions. You're in God questions. Who is in charge for you? One hot July afternoon I trudged up a walkway to visit a man who had not been active in our church for a number of years. I was the new pastor at that church. I thought I'd go around and visit the inactive members, see if I could get 'em active. The church was unsure of just why he wasn't active. Some people said he was inactive because of the Methodist Church's stand on South Africa. Others said, no, no, it wasn't that. It was the debate we had over homosexual rights. Anyway, I went up, knocked on his door, he greeted me sullenly, I told him, "I'm your new preacher." And I could tell he really didn't want a new preacher or an old preacher, but he was good enough to let me inside; we went in, we sat down, chatted for a few minutes, and then I asked him, "Why aren't you active in the church anymore?" Was it the thing over homosexual rights? Was it the support of the National Council of Churches? I mean, we wanna get these things straight. What was it? Well, it wasn't just any one thing, he said to me. It was a lot of things. "What things?" I ask. And he began to talk. He spoke of fears. Fears that his country was falling apart. Nobody would stay in place. Crime was rising; people were being murdered right in their beds. He had voted for Reagan, oh, he had thought maybe Reagan could take matters in hand, make a change. But what, good things were worse than they were when he took office. I felt anger rising in me. Was this any way for a Christian to talk? You ought to be ashamed talking like that about other people, that was what I was thinking. But I noticed the man's voice was becoming louder, his raving was becoming more bizarre. He said, "A few years ago, I didn't even own a gun. "Now I own 20 guns; I sleep with two rifles beside my bed. "And I'll tell you, by God, when they come up "and try to take what's mine, I'm gonna be ready." I realized that his raving had gone beyond mere reactionary opinions. I was in the presence of a deeply troubled man. "I tell you," he said, "I tell you, "nobody's in control. "Everything is just cut loose, nobody is in charge!" See, what I was about to do as a preacher, I was about to minister to the symptoms of his illness without getting to the source. All that resentment and hate had its source in a deeper fear: Nobody's in charge; nobody's in control. I tell you, life can be very confusing when it gets dark, and nobody's in control. The Feast of Christ the King, which we celebrate today, was invented in 1925 by Pope Pius XI. 1925, get it? A festival to celebrate Christ Kingship in the modern world. 1925 with lights going out all over Europe, and chaos reigning in the streets, and serpents' eggs ready to hatch by the 30s, Pope Pius proclaimed, the Lordship of Christ, the goal of human history, the joy of hearts, the fulfillment of human aspirations, the consummation of history to put all things under his feet. When the lights go out in your life, it's a great help to know who's in charge. Many of the problems which beset us do lend themselves to political solutions. But some of our problems are deeper. Sometimes what's happening in your own life is so chaotic, confusing, frighteningly out of control, that you need somebody to take charge. You need to know that the one who hung the stars and set the planets in motion and laid the foundations of the earth is there, for you. A Jew stands before us, scorned by the world and its rulers. When the lights go out, and everything is cut loose, when you feel like Peter on trial out in the darkness, it's just real good to know who sits on the throne. Crown him, Lord of all. (peaceful organ music) (harmonious organ and choral music) (peaceful organ music) (harmonious organ and choral music)

- The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Let us pray. Oh, eternal God, from everlasting to everlasting, the alpha and the omega of this vast creation,

we worship thee. As we have heard thy Word proclaimed, we acknowledge the power and dominion which is thine and thine alone. Thus we turn to thee in our time of need, knowing that thou hast heard our prayer before we speak, and answered before we know our need. Let us pray for the Church of Jesus Christ, that begun, maintained, and inspired by thy Spirit, it may be faithful, true, and unafraid. Let us pray for those who do not believe, who are driven by doubt, or have turned against thee. Open their eyes to see beyond the frailties of the Church, the power of thy love revealed in Jesus Christ, and to follow his call. Let us pray for peace in our world. Disarm our weapons, settle our disputes, and destroy ancient hate that smolders still from one generation to the next. Create a spirit of good will among every race and nation. Let us pray for all who are hungry or who have no place to call home. Increase in us and all who prosper concern for the disinherited. Let us pray for all social outcast, for those excluded by their own militants, or by the judgment of others. Give us grace to accept those the world deems unacceptable. Let us pray for the sick, for all who suffer pain in body or in mind and cry out for healing. May they be comforted in thy care. Let us pray for the dying as they face the final mystery. May they greet death unafraid, believing in thy saving grace. Let us pray for those who are lonely and afraid, who have no one to call a friend. May they be remembered and reassured of thy love. All these things and whatever else thou knowest that we need, grant us, oh God, for the sake of him who died and rose again, and now lives and reigns with you for all eternity, amen. In this season of thanksgiving, let us offer our gifts unto the one who made us. (peaceful organ music) ♪ Then it shall be brought to pass ♪ ♪ The same that is written ♪ ♪ Death is swallowed up ♪ ♪ In victory ♪ (vibrant orchestral and choral music) ♪ Oh death oh death ♪ ♪ Where where is thy stay oh death ♪ ♪ Where is thy stay ♪ ♪ Where is thy victory ♪ ♪ Where is thy victory ♪ ♪ Oh death oh death ♪ ♪ Where is thy stay ♪ ♪ Oh pray where is thy victory ♪ ♪ Oh pray oh death ♪ ♪ Where is thy stay ♪ ♪ Oh pray oh pray ♪ ♪ Where is thy victory ♪ ♪ Oh pray ♪ ♪ Where is thy victory ♪ ♪ The sting of death ♪ ♪ The sting the sting of death ♪ (vibrant orchestral and choral music) (peaceful organ music) (harmonious organ and choral music) Oh, mighty God, who crownest the year with thy goodness, we thank thee that the bounty of thy blessing is poured out upon us in seed time and in harvest. We bless thee for the order and constancy of nature, for the beauty of creation and for those who have gathered in the fruits of the earth. Most especially, we thank thee for the eternal riches of thy grace, in Jesus Christ our Lord, to who with thee, oh God, and the Holy Spirit, the all glory and honor and worship forever and ever, and in who's name we pray:

Congregation: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, amen. (peaceful organ music) (harmonious organ and choral music)

- The grace of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ be with you now and always, amen. ♪ Glory to God ♪ ♪ And to the Son ♪ ♪ And to the Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ As it was in the beginning ♪ ♪ Is how it ever shall be ♪ ♪ World without an end amen ♪ (vibrant organ music)