

- Karen Tucker for being our organist this morning. She has helped us out frequently this summer. She's a professor at the Divinity School, teaching in areas of worship, but she is obviously a multi-talented person, and we thank her for her presence with us this summer. Next Sunday, the school year begins here in Duke Chapel, with a glorious service for orientation Sunday. Please note the note in the bulletin about our choir auditions. Let us stand for the greeting. Come to this place of God's visitation and blessing. Every one is welcome here. (congregation mumbling) In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female. (congregation mumbling) We gather to celebrate God's revelation in Jesus, while others worship the same God in other ways. (congregation mumbling) (lively organ music) ♪ A mighty fortress is our God ♪ ♪ A bulwark never failing ♪ ♪ Our helper, He amid the flood ♪ ♪ Of mortal ills prevailing ♪ ♪ For still our ancient foe ♪ ♪ Doth seek to work us woe ♪ ♪ His craft and power are great ♪ ♪ And armed with cruel hate ♪ ♪ On Earth is not his equal ♪ ♪ Did we in our strength confide ♪ ♪ Our striving would be losing ♪ ♪ Were not the right man or side ♪ ♪ The man of God's own choosing ♪ ♪ You ask who that may be ♪ ♪ Christ Jesus it is he ♪ ♪ Lord Sabaoth his name ♪ ♪ From age to age the same ♪ ♪ And he must win the battle ♪ ♪ And though this world with devils filled ♪ ♪ Should threaten to undo us ♪ ♪ We will not fear for God has willed ♪ ♪ His truth to triumph through us ♪ ♪ The prince of darkness grim ♪ ♪ We tremble not for him ♪ ♪ His rage we can endure ♪ ♪ For lo his doom is sure ♪ ♪ One little word shall fell him ♪ ♪ That word above all earthly powers ♪ ♪ No thanks to them abideth ♪ ♪ The spirit and the gifts are ours ♪ ♪ Through him who with us sideth ♪ ♪ Let goods and kindred go ♪ ♪ This mortal life also ♪ ♪ The body they may kill ♪ ♪ God's truth abideth still ♪ ♪ His kingdom is forever. ♪

- Let us pray. Oh God, you have created us for yourself. You have made our minds restless until they embrace your purpose as our own. Our hearts aimless, until they adopt your will as our own. And our hands profitless, until they seize your task as our own. We praise you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whom you have revealed the person you created us to be. Let your revelation never cease, until our minds and hearts and hands, are wholly committed to your service, amen. You may be seated.

- Please join me together as we pray the Prayer for Illumination.

All: 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 your message with joy this day, amen.

- A reading from the gospel, according to Saint John. Chapter six, versus 56 through 69. "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood, abide in me. "And I in them, just as the living father sent me. "And I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me "will live because of me. "This is the bread that came down from Heaven, "not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. "But the one who eats this bread will live forever." He said these things while he was teaching in the Synagogue at Capernaum. When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This teaching is difficult. "Who can accept it?" But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, "Does this offend you? "Then what if you were to see the Son of Man

"ascending to where he was before?" "It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is useless. "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. "But among you, there are some who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first, who were the ones that did not believe and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, "For this reason, I have told you "that no one can come to me, "unless it is granted by the Father." Because of this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the 12, "Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? "You have the eternal words of life. "We have come to believe and know "that you are the holy one of God." This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Praise be to God.

- Today's Psalm is number 84, found on page 805 in your hymnal. Please stand and sing the Psalm responsively. ♪ How lovely is your dwelling place, oh Lord of Hosts ♪ ♪ My soul longs, faints for the courts of the Lord ♪ ♪ My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God ♪ ♪ Oh God of hosts, my ruler and my God ♪ ♪ At your alters even the sparrow finds a home ♪ ♪ And the swallow a nest for herself ♪ ♪ where she may lay her young ♪ ♪ Blessed are those who dwell in your house ♪ ♪ Ever singing your praise ♪ ♪ Blessed are those whose strength is in you ♪ ♪ And on whose hearts are the highways to Zion ♪ ♪ As they go through the valley of tears ♪ ♪ They make it a place of springs ♪ ♪ The early rain also covers it with pools ♪ ♪ They go from strength to strength ♪ ♪ The God of gods will be seen in Zion ♪ ♪ Oh Lord God of Hosts, hear my prayer ♪ ♪ Give ear, oh God of Jacob ♪ ♪ Behold our shield, oh God ♪ ♪ Look upon the face of your anointed ♪ ♪ For a day in your courts is better ♪ ♪ Than a thousand elsewhere ♪ ♪ I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God ♪ ♪ Than dwell in the tents of wickedness ♪ ♪ For the Lord God is a sun and shield ♪ ♪ And bestows favor and honor ♪ ♪ No good thing does the Lord withhold ♪ ♪ From those who walk uprightly ♪ ♪ Oh Lord of Hosts blessed are those who trust in you ♪ (tranquil organ music) (congregation singing)

- You may be seated. (tranquil organ music) (soloists singing in foreign language)

- The Epistle lesson for today is from Ephesians 6. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil for we are not contending against flesh and blood but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand the evil day and having done all to stand, stand therefore having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the equipment of the Gospel of peace. Besides all these, taking the shield of faith with which you can quench the flaming darts of the evil one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance making supplication for all the saints. And also for me that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak. This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

- Be strong in the Lord. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand. Now, one of the reasons that we love the Bible, one of the reasons we keep reading it over and over again is that you find that it's not the same Bible. Oh, it's the same words but we're not the same readers. And that accounts for why many you've had the experience of hearing some biblical text over and over again and yet there is that moment when you hear that text as if for the first time. There are texts, there are biblical stories that mean absolutely nothing to you at 19 but you wake up at 30 and it's as if a hand reaches out and grabs you by the neck and shakes you up and down. And you're changed. The world is re-described accurately. And that's one reason we keep reading scripture. And for me, this describes my own impression with Ephesians 6. Ephesians 6 has never been one of my favorite passages of scripture. All this talk about the sword and the shield and taking the armor of God and I think it's because of the opinion engendered in me in college ROTC toward the U.S. Army. I was in ROTC I eventually was commissioned a first lieutenant in the armored division even though I never saw a tank. And I have often wondered what on Earth is all this talk about these military metaphors of the sword and the shield and the armament. And what does that have to do with the religion of the prince of peace? I am uncomfortable as mixing of these crusading metaphors with the religion of Jesus. And yet, it may be that we've come again to the right time to hear this scripture right. I met him about this time of the year. It was his first week. New student on the Duke campus. First year student, freshman and I could tell he was a little tentative, a little anxious about being a new student here on campus and we talked and when I saw him about three weeks later and I asked him, "Well, how are you fitting in "in the university? "How are things going?" And he said, "Fine, I really like it. "I'm really liking the place." And he said, "I'm really finding it quite an amazing experience." And I said, "In what way is it an amazing experience?" He said, "Well, take just this morning. "I went to breakfast in the U Room "and it was eight o'clock and the place was filled "right before morning classes and I had to look around "to get a table "and I saw this guy sitting over at a table, "I asked him if I could sit with him. "He said yes. "We sat down, we are our cornflakes in silence "and then he asked me well, "what year are you here at Duke? "And I said that I was a freshman. "And he said well, I'm a freshman too. "And we started talking "and he asked me the same question you asked, "how do you like it here at the university? "And I said well, fine. "Of course, there's been things to adjust to "and there've been things that I've encountered "that make me kind of uncomfortable "but I'm dealing with that. "He asked me well, what are the things "that you've been dealing with that kind "of make you uncomfortable. "I said, well, I guess I kinda look "at things differently than a lot of people around here. "You see, I'm a Christian." With that he said this guy drops his fork, his mouth drops open and he says, "I don't believe that. "You, a Christian?" He said, "That's unbelievable, I'm a Christian too. (congregation laughing) "Right here at breakfast in the university "run into a Christian, I can't believe that. "Well, we exchanged phone numbers "and all of sudden we'd have to get together again." Now I tell you, that conversation would not have been held here 30 years ago. 20 years ago. I tell you something, something is new. There has been a kind of seismic shift in American public life and things are different for us. I'm wondering, maybe this Ephesians 6, telling you don't go out there unarmed, don't go out there ill-equipped, you better get your sword and a shield, I'm wondering if that kind of talk makes more sense to people say of today's younger generation than it did to my generation? 'Cause I grew up in Bible Belt Greenville, South Carolina where home and church and school all worked together in a vast conspiracy, to kind of make us Christian. Being Christian was kind of the normal, natural American thing to do. You became Christian just by drinking the water, breathing the air. You couldn't even buy a gallon of gas on Sunday morning when Sunday school was in session. I don't think my parents ever worried about whether or not I

would grow up Christian. It was the only game in town. And yet I woke up a few years ago and realized that whether or not my parents were justified in believing that, I don't meet anybody who believes that today. I don't meet any young parents, Baptists, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, Lutherans. I just don't meet anybody who thinks their children will grow up affirming this faith just by living in a certain neighborhood and drinking the water, breathing the air. There is a new sense that if our young will affirm this faith, it will be as a kind of counter-cultural act. We'll have to be intentional about it. And so suddenly this talk of defensive armament begins to make sense. But we're not contending just against flesh and blood, we're contending, it's like there's something, somebody in charge of some kind of an assault against the faith. You better not go out there unarmed. And from what I can observe, main line liberal Protestantism has been the last to get the message of this. That the world has shifted, that that comfortable arrangement we once had with this culture has ended. There'll be no more props or free passes or crutches for the church. If our young grow up affirming this faith, we'll have to do it to them. We'll have to be intentional about it. Of course, I woke up this week to be informed by Bob Booth, on Good Morning America that I was fortunate enough to live in the best city in the United States. (congregation laughing) And I confess, I went through the day a little depressed worrying about the people like in Des Moines. If this is the best place anyway, (congregation laughing) even in this good place, increasing numbers of people are starting to feel like that freshman, like it's if you're Christian, it's like you're a member of some kind of new minority faith. It's no longer the natural, normal thing to do. I was out in Texas speaking and after my series of sermons, we had a kind of discussion session and during the discussion session, my host preacher said to me with the laypeople there, "You know, you seem to have such a negative view of culture. "You seem to have such a negative view of the world." And I said "Well, yes, I'm from South Carolina. "Maybe that has something to do with it. "But okay, maybe this is a great place to live "but I notice you have a burglar alarm on your church. "Let's turn it off tonight "and just see if Wichita Falls is a great place to live." I think we're just reading the situation a bit differently. On the way out, after the discussion, I passed a group of women in animated conversation. One of the group said to me, "We're talking about you." I said, "What?" And she said, "Well, we don't know "that you preachers know how tough it is out there." "Tough?" She said, "Yeah. "We're all public school teachers here in town. "And we don't know if you know what it's like. "I'm talking about a sixth grader on heroin. "I'm talking about an eighth grader "who's been abandoned by her parents "both of whom are physicians in Wichita Falls. "I'm talking about that kind of thing." and I said, "Well, your preacher thinks "this is a great place to live." And said, "Yeah, he's never been in a middle school "in his life. "He doesn't know." I said, "Well, get back in there "and tell your minister what you need to survive." You come to church on Sunday morning, we're talking about the birds and the bees and the flowers and you're thinking about what you'll encounter on Monday morning in the office. I thought about those teachers when a little later I was in a church where this woman told me that she was the convener of the public school teachers prayer group. Meets every Wednesday morning in that church at six o'clock. They have prayer, somebody presents a case study from some aspect of her work that calls into question her faith, her ethical responsibilities of Christian and then they pray for God to give them strength to resist in an inhuman situation. I predict, you heard it here first, I predict that is the wave of the future for the American church. It's as if we're up against something. And so a popular book this year has been by Yale Law professor, Stephen Carter. "The Culture of Disbelief." And Carter analyzing legal decisions in the last couple of decades looking at the treatment of religion and the media says, we live in a culture of disbelief where it's as if there's a sort of policing function in the media on TV, in the movies, in our law courts which makes sure that if religion is spoken of in public, it

is mostly as a matter of ridicule. If you look at court briefs about religion, Carter says it is as if there is only one explanation that there are still people running loose who honor God and that is they are mentally unbalanced in some way and need to be protected from themselves. And I recall years ago, William Buckley saying, "It maybe at a nice dinner party in the northeast "you can bring up religion around the dinner table once "but if you bring it up twice, "you will never be invited back to dinner." The culture of disbelief. Even in my nice number one city, Durham, middle-class, manicured neighborhood, there is an increasing awareness on Sunday morning that we're moving to something different than the rest of the world. It's as if the world is buying a different set of goods, marching to the beat of a different drummer. These words from Ephesians, the writer says were written in chains. The writer to the Ephesians wrote these words in jail, the source of some of the best early Christian writing. His world looked at Christians then and saw in them a challenge to the way the world does business. Our world looks at us and deals with us not by throwing us in jail but rather by ignoring, ridiculing us but still, we're up against something. You better not go out of those doors unarmed. A recent study of college students who became involved in harmful religious cults said that the one thread running through the history of these students' lives was that they came to college with very little religious education, with very little sophisticated understanding about religious faith, very little grounding and this, the study said, left them peculiarly vulnerable for the first religious claims that came blowing through town promising to overwhelm their great sense of inadequacy. You better not go out there unarmed. In fact, I'm saying that's probably a reason that you've gotten out of bed and come over today. You're seeking to be equipped and my role as a preacher is not as it once might have been to sort of helpfully nudge basically nice people toward basically good majority American goals. My job is to give you a shield and a buckler and a sword and armament. Notice that all the armament mentioned here in Ephesians is mainly of a defensive nature. What you need to resist. There is a new awareness that as you go about your life Monday through Saturday, you're up against something. So pray for me. Pray that I might speak the word of God boldly and pray for yourselves that you might be given the grace to resist, to go against the grain, to be named by other powers than the principalities and powers which have us in their grip. Pray that we might speak the word of God with a new boldness. Amen. (tranquil organ music) (congregation singing)

Preacher: The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Let us pray. You may be seated. Oh God, your word of centuries ago reaches our ears. Speaking in images that are sometimes foreign but sometimes so familiar we are stunned by their power. Be strong in the Lord. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand. We hear these words spoken in triumph by one in chains. Beaten but not broken, persecuted but not forsaken. Quite honestly we don't know whether to be terrified or comforted by these words. They terrify us because they proclaim the reality that following Jesus is not always easy. We want it to be easy, we want our Christianity to be something pleasant that completes a full and productive life. We want a world where everyone holds Christian values, even if they don't hold Christian beliefs. We want a gentle, caring world, characterized by politeness, if not love. But that's not the world we live in. In fact, it is often a hostile, brutal world. At best, it has become indifferent to Christian beliefs, at worst, openly antagonistic. We don't want to need the armor of God but it is promised to us nevertheless for times such as these. For times when violence is a daily fact of reality and human life is

held cheaply. For times when value systems conflict and Christian beliefs are considered naive and ignorant. For times when our planet and our very existence is endangered by self-serving, callous exploitation. For times when power is sought for its own sake and wielded as a weapon. For times when our economic, cultural and spiritual survival are threatened from without and within. For times when the power of evil seems so strong and the power of peace so inadequate. For times like these when we are at risk of dangers, real and imagined which we name before you. The promise of strength and protection in the midst of danger is a bittersweet word of comfort. It opens our eyes to the reality of the world we live in yet also assures us that no matter what, we are never alone. We may be beaten but not broken, persecuted but not forsaken. Give us courage to face the world with confidence guided by your truth, emboldened by your spirit. Help us stand firmly against evil in whatever forms we find it and help us live as those who display love as a shield of strength to a world which finds love in oddity. Through Jesus Christ our Lord who shows us the triumphant power of love. Amen. Let us offer ourselves and our gifts in thanksgiving to the Lord. (tranquil organ music) (lively organ music) ♪ The Lord is Christ given ♪ (soloists singing) ♪ The Lord is Christ given ♪ (soloists singing) ♪ My salvation ♪ (lively organ music) ♪ Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow ♪ ♪ Praise Him, all creatures here below ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ ♪ Praise Him above, ye heavenly host ♪ ♪ Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪

- Let us pray. Almighty God, giver of every good and perfect gift, teach us to render to you all that we have and all that we are that we may praise you not with our lips only but with our whole lives, resisting evil with the armor of love that we may turn the duties, the sorrows and the joys of all our days into a living sacrifice to you through our Savior Jesus Christ who taught us to pray.

All: Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed by 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. (lively organ music) ♪ Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee, God of glory, Lord of love ♪ ♪ Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee ♪ ♪ Opening to the sun above ♪ ♪ Melt the clouds of sin and sadness ♪ ♪ Drive the dark of doubt away ♪ ♪ Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day ♪ ♪ All Thy works with joy surround Thee ♪ ♪ Earth and Heaven reflect Thy rays ♪ ♪ Stars and angels sing around Thee ♪ ♪ Center of unbroken praise ♪ ♪ Field and forest, vale and mountain ♪ ♪ Flowery meadow, flashing sea ♪ ♪ Singing bird and flowing fountain call us ♪ ♪ To rejoice in Thee ♪ ♪ Thou art giving and forgiving ♪ ♪ Ever blessing, ever blessed ♪ ♪ Wellspring of the joy of living ♪ ♪ Ocean depth of happy rest ♪ ♪ Thou our Father, Christ our Brother ♪ ♪ All who live in love are Thine ♪ ♪ Teach us how to love each other ♪ ♪ Lift us to the joy divine ♪ ♪ Mortals, join the happy chorus ♪ ♪ Which the morning stars began ♪ ♪ Father love is reigning o'er us ♪ ♪ Brother love binds man to man ♪ ♪ Ever singing, march we onward ♪ ♪ Victors in the midst of strife ♪ ♪ Joyful music leads us Sunward in the triumph song of life ♪

- Let us pray. The Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always, amen. (lively organ music)