

- Welcome to the chapel on this second Sunday after Easter. We are doubly blessed this Sunday. Our guest preacher is our own John Berglund. John taught for a number of years. Taught preaching at the Divinity School and was Director of Development there and he returns to the chapel this morning and we welcome those of you, John's friends. Remember his time in Durham as we welcome everyone this Sunday. We're also blessed by the presence of the Raleigh Boy Choir under the direction of Mr. Thomas Sibley and the accompanist is Terry Poole. Their annual visit to the chapel is always a very special time and we're delighted to have these talented singers with us. And now let us continue our worship. (uplifting instrumental music) (choir vocalizing indistinctly) Let us pray. Oh, mighty God, who by the birth of thy holy child, Jesus, has given us a great light to dawn upon our darkness. Grant we pray thee that in His light, we may see light. Bestow upon us, we beseech thee, that most excellent Christmas gift of all, the gift of thy presence in our worship, prayer and praise, ever brightening our lives so that we might be formed into the new creations and that Christ, having become like us, we might become more like Him, amen.

- Let us pray. 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. For thus, says the Lord, sing aloud with gladness for Jacob and raise shouts for the chief of the nations. Proclaim, give praise and say the Lord has saved His people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the farthest parts of the Earth. Among them, the blind and the lame. The woman with child, and her who is in travail together. A great company they shall return here with weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back. I will make them walk by brooks of water in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my first born. Hear the word of the Lord, o' nations, and declare it in the coastlands of far off say he who scattered Israel will gather him and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock for the Lord has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. They shall come and sing aloud in the height of Zion and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord, over the grain, the wine and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd. Their life shall be like a watered garden and they shall languish no more, then shall the maidens rejoice in the dance and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy. I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow. I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness says the Lord. This ends the reading of the first lesson.

- Let's stand for the canonical. Read responsively. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel (crowd reciting the verse indistinctly) and hath raised up a mighty salvation for us. As he spake by the mouth of His holy prophets that we should be saved from our enemies to perform the mercy promised to our forefathers. To perform the oath, which He swore to our forefather Abraham, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, in holiness and righteousness before Him. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the highest to give knowledge of salvation unto his people through the tender mercy of our God. To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. (uplifting instrumental music) (choir vocalizing indistinctly)

- The second lesson is taken from Ephesians. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him, He destined us in love to be His sons and daughters through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of His will. To the praise of His glorious grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the beloved. For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord, Jesus, and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers that the God of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him having the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, and what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints? This ends a reading of the second lesson. (uplifting instrumental music) (choir vocalizing indistinctly)

- The gospel lesson for this second Sunday of Christmas is from the Gospel of St. John. The first chapter, the first 18 verses. Hear the word of God. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came for testimony to bear witness to the light that all might believe through him he was not the light but came to bear witness to the light. The true light that enlightens every man was coming in for the world. He was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world knew Him not. He came to His own home, and His own people received Him not. But to all who received Him who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth. We have beheld His glory, glory as of the only son from the Father. John bore witness to Him and cried, this was He of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me and was before me and from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son whom is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known. The Word of God for the people of God, amen. Let us pray. Let the words of my mouth in the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, o' Lord, our strength and our redeemer, amen. On the first Sunday of a new year, I invite you to hear these simple words of holy scripture. In the beginning, there found first in Genesis. And it begins like this. In the beginning, God. There found also in our gospel lesson. In the beginning was the Word. The Hebrews had a view that the whole of chaos was a watery darkness and then the Earth being without form and void and darkness upon the face of all the deep, the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the water and God said, "Let there be light." And there was light. And in the narrative of the book of Genesis, we began to get this concept of confusion, chaos, darkness, and then a creative organizing principle. In the beginning, God. I love that image of a spirit moving over the deep. The spirit of God. That Hebrew word, *beruach*, sometimes translated spirit, sometimes translated wind. Sometimes it's simply the breath of life that makes one living soul. Sometimes it's that raging storm that crosses the desert, changes everything when it's passed. But here in that first part of Genesis, it's like this. The winds of God moving over the deep bringing forth light in all the darkness. But I don't believe all of it. My cosmos is not like this. Not the way they perceived it. Waters of chaos held back by the firmament of heaven. Stars strung out there in those

bowls inverted over a flat Earth. Beneath it a place of the deads, and underneath all of it, the chaos and the darkness of the waters again. I don't think that the Earth is flat and that chaos is on every side and all around us in shape of watery deep. Perhaps, then, I can hear more if I hear the prologue of the Gospel of John. He doesn't so much come with narrative now, but with a poem. A hymn, if you will, but the same words. In the beginning was the Word, and now reaching for the ideal, the ideal man, the ideal world, and an organizing principle those Greek stoics had in view that there was a thing called logos. Oh, they still had great reverence for spirit, and some for flesh, but never believed the two would meet. But there was that word, a creative word, that spoke and everything was put in order. A providential word that spoke, and all things were maintained in perfect care. A redeeming word of forgiveness. And this word became flesh and dwelt among us. One of the Greeks, Aristotle, wanted to know the mysteries of human personality as much as he wanted to know the mysteries of the whole cosmos. And he particularly was concerned with where the conscious me resides in human personality. Have you thought of that lately? In trying to find this quintessence or the pneuma, this spirit, Aristotle and his slaves dissected 600 specimens. Not wanting to do any violence to the tissues, he strangled every victim. Modern medicine tells us that they built up a great pressure on one side of the heart, collapsed one ventricle of the heart. Forced air into the heart and into the arteries. And then as they poured hot wax into the cavities, and Aristotle did his meticulous dissection, he found what he thought was quintessence, pneuma. Breath of life in the heart and in the arteries. You know those ancient medical diagrams that show a three ventricle heart. And how so much of our scripture says let Jesus come into your heart. Believe with your heart. Is that the residence of human consciousness? I don't believe that which Aristotle put down for so many centuries is the truth. No. But I am coming to the mystery. The Spirit of God that moves across the chaos of the deep and brings forth light in darkness, the Word of God then enters flesh and brings forth life and enlightenment, I want to talk about that reality and I'd like to talk about it in the beginning of 1987. What is your organizing principle today? Oh, I know something about the beginnings of this great university. James B. Duke made the observation that the two fundamental principles in civilization are education and religion. When he established the indenture that created this chapel, he wrote it like this. Education next to religion is the most civilizing influence in the history of mankind. And the model of your university is eruditio et religio. Enlightenment and reverence. And on this day, I'm not sure we could find a philosopher here that had one organizing principle certainly not so narrow as the concept logos. Perhaps a method, then. I believe it is this. We think that if you can break it down, understand cause and effect, if you can just get to the very center of it then somehow you will know the way it is and so we have a method. Analytical reductionism. You want to know enough about the universe? Take your telescope and discover the measurements of time and space. You want to know enough about human personality? Just break it down, break it down. You want to know enough about flesh. It begins in zoology with dissections of primitive beings. In the late 19th century, a philosopher named Aldous Huxley made the observation. As the island of knowledge grows, the shoreline of wonder will also increase. My complaint this morning is that at the beginning of this year, we are so convinced about facts, so little impressed with faith, we have so much retreated to the center of the island of knowledge that we have neglected the shoreline of wonder. Come along. Won't you hear it? In the beginning, the Spirit of God moving over the darkness and there was light. And in the beginning, the Word, and it was life, and light for mankind. And today, the incarnate Christ, the Word made flesh, the one who lived it out in Galilee and died it on Jerusalem's hill. That one who did in fact come into time and space but with a reality that cannot be kept only in time and space. You know about those realities a little, don't you? The thing that is so true that it's before the

beginning. The thing that is so true it is beyond the end. My brother, who is a neurosurgeon, has a child. College student now. He was a modern, rational, cause and effect child. And every time we ever sat down for a conversation, I knew that his father was a scientist. He knew that his uncle was a preacher and he often came saying, Uncle John, tell me a story, and I'd tell him a Bible story. The hairiest ones that I could find. If the ax head would float or Jonah could be spit out of the belly of a whale after three days, I love to tell him those stories and I knew sooner or later would come the question, but Uncle John, is that part of the story really true? And that's when I would say, Christopher, it's so true that even if it never was, it always is. He'd just say go on and tell the rest of the story. But invariably, his scientist father would ask, what do you mean by that? Though it never was, it always is. Just that. There is a reality that cannot, cannot be measured in time and space and history. You don't ask did it happen. It happens. Before the beginning and beyond the end. And that reality, could you see it today? I suppose your cosmos is like mine now. If we begin with the concept of light and John certainly gives us that, one thing I know is, it travels 186,000 miles a second. Faster than I could imagine. That's one second, and in that time, light goes more than seven times around our Earth. It comes from the moon in a little over one second. Reaches us from our sun today after it's been in journey at that fantastic speed for eight minutes. And the stars, the nearest star that we will see tonight is three light years away. Light in journey at 186,000 miles a second for more than three years, and now we see it. Some stars we see tonight will have light in journey since the birth of Christ, and now we see it. Do you begin to sense the shoreline of wonder? The wonder expressed in the eighth Psalm, when I consider the heavens, the moon and the stars that are the work of thy fingers, o' God, what has man that thou art mindful of Him and the Son of Man that thou dost visit him. There was a little girl busy one day with a pencil and piece of paper. Her mother said, what are you doing? She said, I'm drawing a picture of God. Oh, honey, her mother said, nobody knows what God looks like. Well, they will when I get through, she said. I wish I could be that sure. How would you paint God today? All of the artists of the Catholic kings intended it. Tintoretto put Him on the mountaintop right at the highest peak of all creation so He could be above it, ruling it. But He was removed from it. Is that God? Most of the artists of the Catholic kings painted Him as an old man. So old that He was decaying, visibly decaying. Raphael had him as a kind of a busybody God. Showed him flying around heaven with unborn babe in each hand. Now you think of the God who sets the stars in their courses. Who looks at time ever beginning and ending. Sees 1,000 years and calls it one day. You think about this God who created our world and everything in it, and I like to think He did it after supper on the day when he'd spread the whole Milky Way as a carpet at His feet. God of gods, light of lights is the way the Nicene Creed says it. Very God, a very God, now how do you paint that God? James B. Duke says find the highest piece of ground and build a great towering church. Let there be enlightenment, and let there be reverence. My worry today as a preacher, when you come into a building that has transcendence like this, and are moved to hear the songs of angels even through the voices of a boys choir, my worry is that the prologue of the Gospel of John will lose the transcendence that it must have for you if you are to hear not the voice of the preacher at all but the other voice speaking. And so I end with the obvious. Flesh. We all came here today wrapped in it. Will you think of it now? The soft bodies of little babies. The wrinkled bodies of the aged. The calloused bodies of laborers. The well-conditioned bodies of college athletes. The beautiful bodies of pageant contestants. The unfeeling bodies of addicts. The wounded bodies of soldiers. The pained bodies of the dying. The decaying bodies of the dead. Flesh. The old Greeks would have found it repugnant to have the idea that the word, the logos, would come flesh. But this is the way my story begins in 1987. How is it with you? It was at the end of a bouncy donkey ride and there was a young mother giving birth to her

first child assisted only by the splintered hands of a carpenter and a child wrapped in rags was laid in a manger and the angels sang and shepherds left their flocks to see. Now, you see it in all its earthiness. Blotchy red baby skin, newborn. A wide open scrawling mouth. Healthy baby bowels. And they're saying God with us, God with us, this is the greatest miracle of all. Let us use all the miracle of media and talk about these short-term gospels about healing and being made rich and being made at peace, but there are two great miracles in the history of mankind. One is this. When God came in Jesus Christ and He made God known to us, and the second is when in His death and resurrection He broke out the end of every tomb. Paul Telling made the observation that we cannot say that God exists. Not even that much. Can't say it in the way that you say a mountain exists or mankind exists. He is so much the other, so much the beyond, than this is the miracle of it all. The Word, which was before there was anything, which will be when everything ends, came, and dwelt among us full of grace and truth. And may I end with foolishness. My own parable. There was a man who wanted to see God. Did not want simply to know about God or hear of God from others. He wanted to see God like Moses went to the Holy Mount and wanting to see Him face-to-face. Learning that there was a holy man who knew God, he went to him and asked, I want to know God. Show me the way. And the holy man, even as he turned away from his request, said, go back to your father's farm and give the cattle their hay. He found it too ordinary. Wanted to stay for another instruction, but by then the holy man was gone. So knowing that in matters of faith, the next step is always obedience, he returned to his father's farm and fed the cattle their hay. But not in the first light of dawn or the bright light of noon day, not in the fading light of evening, not even in the darkness of midnight did he ever sense in stable straw, even when it was mixed with stardust, the presence of God. And after weeks, he came back again. Give me another instruction. I want to see God. And the holy man said, then go to your neighbor's farm and lead his sheep to pasture. And then he was gone. He went to the neighbor's farm, obeying the direction of the holy man. Everyday he led the sheep from their sheep fold. Led them beside green pastures. Beside still waters. But never did he know the presence of God. Not in all of the providence and care and rhythms of the world did he know Him. Impatient, he came back again. I've done what you've told me these two times. Now give me the final instruction. And the holy man said, go to the city. Find the children. Give them milk, give them bread. And he went and found the children and fed them, and watched their joy. Their unquestioning trust. Watched their style as for citizens in the kingdom of God but not in any of it did he see God. And so he gave up, but wanted to return to the holy man and make his complaint. He came back to him and said, you can't tell me where to find God! I followed all of your instructions. Ordinary and foolish as they were, I've done every one of them, and I have not known God. I think you're a fraud and I want no more of this quest. Just let me be an ordinary man. And with that, there was rumbling in a distant cloud. Lightning flashed across the skies. There was the sound of the beating of 10,000 angel wings. Smoke filled the room. The cherubim sang, and fire seemed to be touching everything. Until in the tremendous mystery of it, the man was saying, stop it, stop it, stop it! I only want to see and be an ordinary man. And so we turn from the mysteries of the transcendent to our story. May I sum it up with the poem of Joseph Bailey? Praise God for Christmas. Praise Him for the incarnation. Praise Him for the Word made flesh. Now I will not sing of shepherds watching flocks on frosty nights or angel choruses. I will not sing of a stable bare in Bethlehem or lowing oxen, wise men trailing star with gold, frankincense and myrrh. Tonight I will sing praise to the Father who stood on heaven's threshold and said farewell to His Son as He stepped across the stars to Bethlehem and to Jerusalem. And I will sing.