

(organ music)

- Good morning and welcome on this day of Pentecost here, at the Duke University Chapel. We're glad that you're with us. We welcome back among us, this Sunday, the Reverend Nancy Feree-Clark. Nancy served, here, at Duke Chapel as Assistant Dean and Director of Religious Life for seven years. She's most recently been teaching a course in campus ministry at Duke Divinity School and she is back among us as the Pastor to the congregation at Duke Chapel and we welcome her back in her leadership in the service, today. And we welcome you. And now, let us stand for the greeting. Our help is in the name of the Lord who created Heaven and Earth.

Congregation: Sing to God, ye kingdoms of the Earth, sing praises to the Lord. Hallelujah.

- He rides the Heavens and sends forth his might voice.

Congregation: Hallelujah.

- How wonderful is God in his Holy places, the God of Israel, giving strength and power to His people.

Congregation: Hallelujah.

Pastor Willimon: All who are led by the spirit of God are children of God. Lord send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the Earth.

- Hallelujah. (organ music) (singing hymnal)  
(organ music)

- Let us pray together, the Prayer for Illumination.

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 reading is taken from the book of Genesis, Chapter 11, starting with the first verse. Now, the whole Earth had one language and the same words and they migrated from the East they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, "come let us make bricks "and burn them thoroughly". And they had brick for stone and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "come, "let us build ourselves a city "and a tower with its top in the Heavens "and let us make a name for ourselves, "otherwise, we shall be scattered abroad "upon the face of the whole Earth." The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which, mortals had built and the Lord said, "Look, "they are one people "and they have all one

language "and this is only the beginning of what they will do. "Nothing that they propose to do will now "be impossible for them. "Come, let us go down "and confuse their language, there, "so, that they will not understand one another's speech." So, the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the Earth and they left off building the city. Therefore, it was called Babel because, there, the Lord confused the language of all the Earth and from there, the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the Earth. This is the Word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

- The other assigned reading for this day of Pentecost is from Acts, Chapter 2. When the day of Pentecost had come, they all together in one place, and suddenly a sound came from Heaven like the rush of a might wind and it fill all the house where they were sitting and there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributed and resting on each one of them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now, there were dwelling in Jerusalem, Jews, devout people from every nation under Heaven and at this sound the multitude came together and they were bewildered because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were amazed and they wondered saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans. "How is it that we hear each in our own language. "Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, "Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, "Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, "visitors from Rome both Jews and Proselytes, "Cretans, and Arabians, "We hear them telling in our own tongue "the mighty works of God." All but amazed and perplexed saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others, mocking said, "They are filled with new wine." Peter, standing with the 11, lifted up his voice and addressed them, "people of Judea, "and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, "give ear to my words for these people are not drunk, "as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day, "but, this is what was spoken by the Prophet Joel." And in the last days it shall be, God declares, "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, "your sons and your daughters shall prophesize, "your young men shall see visions, "your old people shall dream dreams." This is the Word of the Lord.

Congregation: Praise be to God. Christopher Lasch has said that the most enduring characteristic of Americans is our unmitigated faith in progress. We believe in progress. We believe that it is possible for us to put aside and be done with the past. And yet, most of the rest of the world knows that though we may think we are over and done with our past, our past is not so easily over and done with us. Witness the events in the past year in what was once Yugoslavia. Ancient ethnic conflicts bubbled up as if out of nowhere and suddenly there was Bosnia and Serbia and Croatia. But, of course you know that this did not come from nowhere. It came from history, from the past. A history that the communist government thought that it had laid aside with its military repression. No. The past came back. History is not so easily eradicated. As one commentator said of events in that part of the world, "We have marched forward from 1991 "to 1918." I'm a southerner, and there's a lot that we southerners do not know, but, one thing we do know is that we have a past, a history. The persistence and the pervasiveness of history. Where I grew up, a frequent question upon meeting someone was, who are his people? It was an inquiry into the past. Flannery O'Connor once complained that people from the north are not from anywhere. But, not me, I knew where I was from. My family did not have much, but, we had a history. And if you didn't believe it, all you had to do was go look at

the great pine chest in which, was kept my great grandfather's Civil War uniform. All you had to do was to look at the clock that my great grandmother once bought from a Connecticut peddler. And every time our family gathered, like, for Sunday dinner, it was a crowded table. For one thing, then, family meant, not that atrophied, shrunken thing called the modern family. No, family was uncles and aunts and cousins. And more than that family meant the gathering of the living and the dead. When we gathered for Sunday dinner at my grandmother's house, two centuries gathered, there, we told stories. And when the family told stories the dead lived, they walked among us. Like the stories of how my grandfather used to always get disgusted on Sundays with my grandmother because she would never get ready for church on time and he would start walking and then in a few minutes here would come the car chugging along the road filled with children and my grandmother would urge him to get into the car but, he would refuse to get in the car. He would keep walking and everybody would stand on the steps of the church and watch this strange scene of a car creeping up the road (laughter)

with a bunch of children mocking their father, out the widows of the car and the father strutting right along and they were never on time for church. And I think that one of the reasons we modern people feel so lonely, so much on our own, is that we don't tell stories about our ancestors. Our great grandparents don't know us, and we don't know them, which means, that most of us are pretty much on our own. There's nobody left to tell us which path to take, or how to get over failure, or how to put up with one another. In our society we don't listen to old people, we institutionalize them because technology makes the elderly ignorant. My five year old grandchild, they say, knows more about computers than I. But, in an agricultural or artisan world, old people had the secrets of how to plant seed and how to harvest and how to lay a fire and build a chair. But, technology gives us the impression that children know more about life than their parents. Nobody over the 40 can program a VCR. But, perhaps I speak far too positively of our ancestors. Because maybe if there's one thing worse than having no history, it's having too much history. Worse than not being able to remember is being unable to forget. As George Will called the Balkans, "a part of the world which has produced much more history "than it was able to consume." And in some measure what George Will said about the Balkans applies to us all. We've all made more history, we are owned by more ancestors than most of us can handle. Because the dead can either be lovingly remembered in nostalgic conversations around the family table, or they can become ghosts to haunt us in our nightmares. I think this is what the Bible means when it says that the sins of the parents are visited upon the children. Can it be that each of us is born bearing a vast memory, large recollections, a past which clings to us no matter how hard we try to forget. In a panel discussion, here, in front of the Chapel, after the L.A. riots, a student, she could not have been more than 19, said in anger, "you brought us, here. "You made us your slaves. "You destroyed our families and now, "you are trying to destroy us." Us. Well, none of this had happened to her. And yet, it all happened to her. The ghost of her ancestors were with her, just as much as the ghost of mine. In the embers of L.A., the sins of our parents, the sins of our grandparents, are being visited among the children. I'm from South Carolina and when you're from South Carolina, you believe in original sin. Oh, we talk progress, we Americans talk newness, every adolescent loves to believe that he or she is the first person to ever arrive on the history of the world. The first generation to live upon the face of the Earth. No, you and I in our wiser moments know that we are the stuff of our past, the accumulation of history. "Most of what we do in psychotherapy," says a friend of mine, "is to try to keep people's pasts from killing them." Well, we began by reading a story of our ancestors. We read the story of the Tower of Babel and then, for this Pentecost we read the story of Pentecost from Acts 2. Pentecost, the day when Israel remembered to give thanks for it's

ancestral past. And there at Pentecost it is said in the second chapter of Acts, Jews from every nation on the face of the Earth were all gathered there, in one room. Every nation on Earth had somebody, there, at Pentecost. Strange nations with strange difficult to pronounce names, like, Cappadocians, Medes, Zelemites, Mesopotamians. Now, this roll call of all the nations at Pentecost is usually taken to mean people from everywhere were there. When the Spirit of God descended, it didn't just descend on one nation, it descended upon people from every nation and every tribe. The fractured alienated peoples on Earth, long since split apart, since the Tower of Babel, by different languages are brought together in the outpouring of the spirited Pentecost. That's how we usually interpret this story. But, Tom Long has pointed out that this Pentecost assemblage is not only a diverse ethnic gathering from various nations, like Medes, Persians, Elamites, but, it is an historically impossible gathering, as well. Those Medes, who showed up at Jerusalem in Acts 2, must have had a really tough time getting there because not only were they forced to travel a couple hundred miles from over in Mesopotamia, but, they had to travel a couple of hundred years, as well. Cause the Medes had long since been extinct in the history of the world. Long gone from the face of the Earth for at least two centuries. There weren't any Medes around. And those Elamites that showed up at Pentecost are mentioned only in Ezra 2:7 and they are never mentioned, again, they just vanish from the face of the Earth, they were dead. You see. We have at Pentecost, not only people from north and south, but, we've got the living and the dead. Here's what I think Acts 2 is saying, here, with these Medes and these Elamites. You should have been in the chapel on Pentecost Sunday, we had a great gathering, we had a huge number of visitors who came in from I-85 for the service. We had some people from Montana, had people all the way from Arizona, Michigan, not to mention a couple of Assyrians, a van load of Babylonians, and a nice little Hittite couple who stayed around after the service. (laughter) This is a wonderfully strange playful story, here, in Acts. And I think it's Acts way of saying that when the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost, it was given, not for people that just happened to speak Hebrew and happen to be living in Jerusalem in the first century, it was given to people of every century and every place. We were all there. That day at Pentecost, it was like our past, the ancestors that we lovingly remember, as well as, the ancestors we try hard to forget, the events of our history, which, we commemorate with monuments in the park, as well as, the ones that we try to sweep under the collective carpet. Everybody got caught up, everybody was brought back for one great reunion, remembered, blessed, redeemed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. After the Gulf War, President Bush announced, "At last, we have exorcised the demon of Vietnam." Well, we wish. That's what most of us want to do with the painful past. Get rid of it. Wash it away, forget it. But, as a child of the Vietnam era, I hope we never forget. Cause we need to remember, we need to fix those troubled days in our collective consciousness. We need to learn from our past, if we can. And we can never learn anything, we can never get free of our ancestors, if we fail to remember, if we fail to recall. Cause it's only in recollection and remembrance that our history can ever be redeemed by the Holy Spirit. And Luke says that day at Pentecost we were all there. I mean, we were all, there. Have you seen the movie, Places of the Heart? The last seen, much happened in the movie, there was violence, there was injustice, and in the last scene in the movie, everybody gathers in the little church in town to celebrate Holy Communion, and the camera pans around the congregation and you are shocked to see there the man who had been murdered many years ago. And over at another pew was the man who murdered him, and who was in turn, executed. And you see people from the little town that had long since been dead. They're all gathered there, at the Lord's table. This is what the church spoke about in its ancient doctrine of the Communion of the Saints. The ancient Christian belief that every time we gather at this Lord's table, that all

of the saints, even those long since gone, that great company is with us. This is felt so peculiarly, here, at Duke Chapel, as you sit in Duke Chapel and you look around at these windows and you see staring down at you, joining us, here, for worship, Gideon, and Mary, and Simon, and Barak, and everybody from the past is joining in with us. The Church was born on Pentecost. The Church, that group of people who gather at the Lord's table and share food with one another, and who tell stories of the living and the dead. At this table, all of our ancestors, all of our past, the baggage from our history is somehow mysteriously caught up in the loving purposes of God and placed on that table and blessed and redeemed in the Spirit. You see, I know and down deep you know that there's a whole lot of your past that you need to do business with. There are memories that you have got within you that you have brought, here, this morning, that are too painful even for you to remember. There are names, there are faces that you haven't thought about in years because you are too frightened to recall, to desperate to break free of their hold upon your life. But, you've got to remember them. You've got to invite them here to church on Pentecost with you. You got to take your history and lay it on that alter and ask God to forgive and redeem and bless and give it back to you, remembered, redeemed. I was out in Utah, I was visiting at the Mormon Tabernacle. The Mormons have a practice called Baptism of the Dead. That is contemporary Mormons can go and be baptized in the name of some long since dead ancestor who was not a Mormon. I met a woman, there, who had traced her family back seven generations to Italy, and she had been baptized dozens upon dozens of times in the name of these long gone, long dead, forgotten Italian relatives. Now, as strange as that might seem, to those of us who are not Mormons, in a way, you see, something very much like that happened at Pentecost in Acts 2. Everybody was there. Even the long forgotten Medes and the Elamites, they were there. Even my slave holding South Carolina ancestors, they were there, my relatives who took the land of the Native Americans and made it their own. My grandfather for whom I was named, but, I never really knew, my father, whom people say that I remind them of, but, I never really knew him. My parents who were just wrong on racial segregation, and my misspent youth and even all the mistakes that I made only yesterday, they were all there. We were all there around the table. When the Spirit descended and when we first broke bread together as the Church, they were all there. We were all there.

- Please stand as we pray together. When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place and all of the many foreigners heard the witnesses speaking in their own tongue. (congregation's response) Speak in the language of our need. Let us hear how our deepest hungers, desires, and aspirations can be fulfilled by your goodness and in your service. (congregation's response) Speak in the language of our fear. Let us hear how our worries about the future and about each other and about ourselves can find rest in your providential care. (congregation's response) Speak in the language of our guilt. Let us hear how are confessed shame for wrong things done and for good things undone is covered by your forgiveness. (congregation's response) Speak in the language of our gratitude. Let us hear how our honest thanks relate us, not only to those with whom we live, but, also to you the Lord and giver of life. (congregation's response) Speak to us in the language of joy. Let us hear how our gladness and our delight not only brightened this world, but, honor you, who made the world. (congregation's response) Speak to use in the language of hope. Let us hear how our yearning and our expectations are not just wishful thinking, but, responses to your promise. (congregation's response) Amen. The Lord invites to his table, all those who love him and who desire to live in peace, one with another. Therefore, let us offer each other signs of reconciliation and love. (murmurs) Let us present with gladness the offerings and oblations of our life and labor to the Lord.

(organ music) ♪ ♪ Every time I feel the Spirit ♪ ♪ Moving in my heart ♪ ♪ I will pray ♪ ♪ Yes, every time I feel the Spirit ♪ ♪ Moving in my heart ♪ ♪ I will pray ♪ ♪ Upon the mountain my Lord spoke ♪ ♪ Out of His mouth came fire and smoke ♪ ♪ Looked all around me, it looked so fine ♪ ♪ Till I asked my Lord if all was mine. ♪ ♪ Every time I feel the Spirit ♪ ♪ Moving in my heart ♪ ♪ I will pray ♪ ♪ Yes, every time I feel the Spirit ♪ ♪ Moving in my heart ♪ ♪ I will pray ♪ ♪ Jordan river, is chilly an' cold ♪ ♪ It chills the body but not the soul ♪ ♪ There ain't but one train, upon this track ♪ ♪ It runs to heaven, an' right back. ♪ ♪ Every time I feel the Spirit ♪ ♪ Moving in my heart ♪ ♪ I will pray ♪ ♪ Yes every time I feel the Spirit ♪ ♪ Moving in my heart ♪ ♪ I will pray ♪ ♪ Every time I feel the Spirit ♪ ♪ Moving in my heart ♪ ♪ I will pray ♪ ♪ Every time I feel the Spirit ♪ ♪ Moving in my heart ♪ ♪ I will pray ♪ ♪ Will pray ♪ (organ music) (singing hymn)  
(organ accompaniment)

- Join me in the Prayer of Thanksgiving, page 17 in the hymnal. The Lord is with you

Congregation: And also with you.

- Lift up you hearts

(congregation's response) Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. (congregation's response) All praise is rightly yours, life giving Lord. In the beginning your Spirit moved over the face of the waters. You breathed into us a breath of life even when we resisted and grieved your Spirit you came through prophets and teachers, Spirit filled to speak Your Word. In the fullness of time, you gave us your Son, Jesus. At his baptism in the Jordan, your Spirit descended upon him and announced him as your beloved son. With your Spirit upon him, he turned away the temptation of sin and proclaimed justice to all people, good news to the poor, release to the captives, freedom to the oppressed, and won for you a new people by water in the Spirit. By the baptism of his death and resurrection, you gave birth to the Church at his ascension, you exalted him to sit at your right hand, where he was with us always in the Spirit, as on the day of Pentecost, and so, in remembrance of these, with your people on Earth and all the company of Heaven, we praise Your name and join in their unending hymn. (organ music) ♪ Holy, holy, holy, ♪ ♪ Lord ♪ ♪ God of power and might ♪ ♪ Heaven and Earth are full of Your glory ♪ ♪ Hosanna in the highest ♪ ♪ Blessed is he who come in the name of the Lord ♪ ♪ Hosanna ♪ ♪ In ♪ ♪ The highest ♪ On the night He offered Himself up for us He took bread, gave thanks to You, broke the bread, gave it to His disciples and said, "Take, eat, "this is my body given for you, "do this in remembrance of me". And when the supper was over He took the cup, gave thanks to You, gave it to his disciples and said, "Drink from this, all of you, this is my blood "of the new covenant pour out for you and many "for the forgiveness of sins, "do this as often as you drink it "in remembrance of me." And so, in remembrance of these, Your mighty acts, in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a Holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ, sacrifice for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith. (organ music) ♪ Christ has come ♪ ♪ Christ is risen ♪ ♪ Christ will come, again ♪ Send the power of you Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts, that in the breaking of this bread and the drinking of this wine, we may know the presence of the living Christ, be renewed in his body and grow in His likeness. And now, we pray that you would baptize us empowering us to be His witness unto all the world, all mighty God, now and forever. (organ music) ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ Our Father who art in Heaven hallowed be thy Name, thy Kingdom come, they will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven, give us this day our daily bread and forgive use 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. Bread which we break, is it not a means of sharing in the body of Christ? When we give thanks over the cup, is it not a means of sharing in the blood of Christ? Come to the Lord's table. (organ music) (singing hymn)

(organ accompaniment) (organ music) ♪ Come, Holy Ghost, ♪ ♪ Our souls inspire ♪ ♪ And lighten with ♪ ♪ Celestial fire; ♪ ♪ Thou the ♪ ♪ Anointing ♪ ♪ Spirit ♪ ♪ Art, ♪ ♪ Who dost thy seven-fold ♪ ♪ Gifts impart. ♪ ♪ Thy blessed ♪ ♪ Unction ♪ ♪ From above ♪ ♪ Is ♪ ♪ Comfort, life, ♪ ♪ And fire ♪ ♪ Of love; ♪ ♪ Enable ♪ ♪ With ♪ ♪ Perpetual ♪ ♪ Light ♪ ♪ The dullness ♪ ♪ Of ♪ ♪ Our ♪ ♪ Blinded ♪ ♪ Sight. ♪ ♪ Anoint ♪ ♪ And cheer ♪ ♪ Our soiled ♪ ♪ Face ♪ ♪ With the ♪ ♪ Abundance ♪ ♪ Of Thy grace; ♪ ♪ Keep far ♪ ♪ Our foes, ♪ ♪ Give peace ♪ ♪ At home; ♪ ♪ Where Thou ♪ ♪ Art guide, ♪ ♪ No ill can come. ♪ ♪ Teach us ♪ ♪ To know ♪ ♪ The Father, ♪ ♪ Son, ♪ ♪ And Thee, ♪ ♪ Of both, ♪ ♪ To be ♪ ♪ But One, ♪ ♪ That through ♪ ♪ The ages ♪ ♪ All along ♪ ♪ I praise ♪ ♪ May be ♪ ♪ Our ♪ ♪ Endless ♪ ♪ Song. ♪ (organ music) (singing hymn)

(organ accompaniment) Please stand for the Benediction. Now may the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the empowering fellowship with the Holy Spirit go with you and be with you, always. ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (organ music) (singing hymn)

(organ accompaniment)