

(happy bell music)

- I will begin our service this morning by my welcoming you to this service of worship in the Duke Chapel on the campus of Duke University. A real joy it is to have all of you here. You will read by the bulletin that both Dr. Wallamin and Miss Furea are out of the city this morning, and it is our joy to be a part of that substitute team of theirs on this significant Sunday in the life of the American family. So for that, we welcome you here, and may I say a world of real welcome to all the Immaculate Conception bell ringers. This is a group of 10 high school students from the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church here in Durham. And what a joy it is to have them here and to have them under the direction of Mr. Edmond Tompkins. They will place for us in a few minutes. They will again. And we are pleased to have them here. It is always a great thrill to be a part of worship in the Duke Chapel, and is particularly important and thrilling to me, on this morning, not only to welcome you here, but to share this ordered service with two people who mean much to me in my own life. The elective of the morning service will be Mary Parkerson. Mrs. Parkerson is the director of development for the Duke Chapel and the director of the Friends of the Chapel. And she's dear to me for a good many reasons. First of all, she's dear to me because she is the wife of my doctor. And he's dear to me because he is the husband of Mary Parkerson. So I got it going and coming. It's a real joy to share the service of worship with one who means so much to me day by day on the Duke campus and whose family friendship is important to me. The preacher for the morning is the Reverend Bishop CP Minnick of Raleigh, North Carolina. I almost feel like a father introducing his son now. And I wouldn't dare attempt to do that. Eight years of my life was spent as the bishop of the church in Virginia. And in those eight years, CP Minnick was one of the leading ministers within all the conference and one of the leading voices of the church. A member of my cabinet, is one of my district superintendents, and then was elected to the highest elective office in the United Methodist Church, and for four years was the bishop of the Jackson, Mississippi, area of the church. Last summer was transferred to Raleigh, North Carolina, and is the bishop of the Raleigh area. Recently, because of its unusual importance across America at this moment, the Counsel of Bishops of the United Methodist Church and three of its most distinguished members to the little land of Nicaragua to make an on-hand survey of all that was going on there, of all that could be found by one who came in. This visit's with Ortega, this visit's with the leadership of the church and of the government in Nicaragua, came back and was reported to the bishops of the church and probably at this moment, this man has lost knowledge of a churchman among us on that strange and difficult land in Central America. So I'm honored to have my son in the ministry, my dear friend, and honored to have Mary be a part of our worship. Let us continue our worship as we sing together hymn number 442. (happy organ music) "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," sayeth the Lord. "If anyone will hear my voice and open that door, "I will come in." Let us be seated and pray. Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We're truly sorry, and we humbly repent. For the sake of your son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways. To the glory of your name, amen. Hear the good news. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That is

God's own proof of His love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. 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 Acts. While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the Word. And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, "Can anyone forbid water "for baptizing these people who have received "the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days. This ends the reading of the first lesson. Would you please stand for the reading of the Psalm 67? You will find this on page 576 in your hymnal. The women will read the regular type. The men will read the bold-faced type. May God be gracious to us and bless us. (men murmuring) That thy way may be known upon Earth. (men murmuring) Let the peoples praise thee, oh God.

- Let all the peoples praise you.

- Let the nations be glad and sing for joy. (men murmuring) Let the people's praise be, oh God.

- Let all the people's praise be.

- The Earth has yielded its increase. (men murmuring) God has blessed us. (men murmuring) (happy organ music) Be seated. The second lesson is taken from the first letter of John. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey His commandments, for this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. Not with the water only, but with the water and the blood. This ends the reading of the second lesson. (happy bell music) (happy bell and flute music) (happy bell music)

- Thank you, bell ringers, for that beautiful music. I'm sure you noted that the title of the selections just presented was "Agape", meaning love. The sermon topic for this morning is love, the mark of discipleship. What a joy it is to be here this morning, and what a high privilege to be a part of this worship service here in Duke Chapel. What a privilege it is to be a part of worship in such a magnificent setting as this. I'm grateful to Bishop Goodson for his introduction. He was most gracious. But the full persons here who know me added when he got through, under breath, undeserved, untrue, but he's always gracious, always kind, and lavishing praise upon his friends. It's a real joy for me to be a part of a worship service in which he is a participant also. And thank you for coming, be a part of this experience this morning. Hear now the Gospel lesson. It is found in the Gospel according to John, chapter 15, verses nine through 17. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I

have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He will give it to you. This I command you, to love one another. The text for this morning is the 12th verse of the 15th chapter of John's Gospel. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. And earlier in this Gospel, John reports Jesus' words, "By this will all people know that you're my disciples "if you love one another". Love is the mark of Christian discipleship. On that night before He was crucified, Jesus and His disciples gathered together in an upper room of in Jerusalem. In the course of the evening, Jesus broke bread and passed it to the disciples saying, "This is my body, which is broken for you". Then he passed a cup of wine to them and said to them as they drank of it, "This is my blood, which is shed for you". And with those words and those actions, He was saying, I love you this much. Later that same evening, Jesus took a towel and a basin of water, and kneeling down before each one of His disciples, He washed the feet of each disciple. And by that action, He was saying to them, I love you this much. It was later that same evening that He spoke to them the words of our text and the other words I quoted from John's Gospel. He said to them, "This is my commandment, "that you love one another as I have loved you. "By this will all people know that you're my disciples, "if you love one another". And it all came into clear focus the next morning, as stretched on a cruel cross, giving His life not for Himself, but for the world. He cried out, "Father, forgive them, "for they know not know what they do". And out of those words and out of that act came this mighty affirmation, this mighty Gospel truth, I love you this much. "Something Beautiful for God" is the title of a book by Malcolm Muggeridge, the British journalist and broadcaster. A little book in which he tells his story of the life and ministry of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. In 1979, Malcolm Muggeridge was sent out to Calcutta, India, to do a documentary film for the British Broadcasting Corporation on the life and ministry of this beautiful and great Christian missionary. During one of the early interviews with Mother Teresa, Malcolm Muggeridge asked her, "Mother Teresa, tell me why you're here "in Calcutta, India, doing this ministry of love". And her response was this. "I came to Calcutta to do something beautiful for God "and something beautiful in the life "of God's children here". And so Malcolm Muggeridge gave to his film, the documentary film which he did, the title "Something Beautiful for God". And the little book which he wrote about her life and ministry, to that book he gave the same title, "Something Beautiful for God". Mother Teresa was born in Yugoslavia in 1910. When she was still a young girl, 12 years of age, she felt in her own life the call of God to give herself to some full-time vocation in the Church. That vocation was not clearly defined. But by the time she reached 18 years of age, it was clearly defined for her. God wanted her to go to India as a missionary. At that time, she knew that the Sisters of Loreto, one of the orders of her church, were working in Calcutta, India, and so she became a part of that order and went to Ireland to a convent of that order to prepare herself for her ministry in India. After a year of preparation, the order sent her out to one of their schools in Calcutta, a high school operated by the Sisters of Loreto. And for the next 17 years of her life, Teresa was a teacher of geography in a lovely setting, a beautiful school with beautiful gardens to which lovely children came each day to be taught. She taught them geography, but she also taught them about the God of the whole world and of the Christ who gave Himself in love for the world. For the next 17 years, she was there teaching. But one day in 1946, she had what she describes as a call within her call, a call to a vocation within a vocation. She heard God saying to her, "Teresa, I no longer need you here in this high school "teaching geography to my

children. "I need you in the streets of Calcutta. "I need you out in the slums ministering "and caring in love for the poorest "of the poor among my children". She shared this call with superiors in her order, and they gave consideration to it for a two year period, and during that same period, trained her for the ministry she felt called to do in the slums of Calcutta. At the end of the two year period, they released her from her commitment to the order and set her free to go and do her ministries of love among the poorest of the poor. She took off the habit of her order and dawned the white sari with the cross of Christ on the shoulder, symbolic of the ministry of self-giving, self-denying love that would characterize her life from that day to this. She went into the slums of Calcutta and with her went some of its students she had taught in the high school, students who also felt called to give themselves in this kind of ministry of love. In the streets of Calcutta, they found hundreds and hundreds of abandoned children, left by families who could no longer care for them, to grow up alone in the streets, most of whom who would eventually die of starvation and disease. She began a home for abandoned children, that she and her associates acquired a house, and they brought hundreds of these children into the house year after year. They brought them into teach them, but most of all, to love them, and to say to them through their own lives, we care about you, and there's a God who cares about you and loves you and sustains you. They started also a home for the dying. It happened this way. One day as she and an associate were walking out in a Calcutta street, they saw a woman dying in the gutter. In fact, the rats had already begun to gather around to nibble at her flesh. They could not stand the sight of one of God's children dying in this way. And so they gathered up her body and carried it to a nearby abandoned Hindu shrine, and that became the first home for the dying. And over the past of 39 years now, they have brought more than 25,000 people from the streets, dying people in the streets of Calcutta into the home for the dying, and over half of them have recovered as a result of the touch of love and care and ministry from Mother Teresa and her associates. She started a treatment center for lepers. By the medicines provided from the Church around the world and by, again, the touch of her love, God's love through her, so many have found healing and a new lease on life. And so far, some 40 years now, she's been there in Calcutta and has moved out from Calcutta all across the world to do a ministry of serving, caring, self-giving love in response to these words of Jesus in our text. "This is my commandment, that you love one another "as I have loved you. "By this will people know that you're my disciples "if you love one another." As I reflect on the life of this beautiful, beautiful Christian missionary in today's world, Mother Teresa, as I reflect this morning on these words of Jesus, I hear again in the call in my life. I hear again the call to the Church. "Love one another as I have loved you. "By this will the world know that you're my disciples "if you love one another." Surely no word is more descriptive of the life of Jesus than the word love. How often it came from His lips. Love your neighbors, love your enemies, love that you might by sons and daughters of God in Heaven. Love as God loves who sends His rain on the good and the evil and makes the sun to shine on both the just and the unjust. And how often these words are used to describe Him. He had compassion upon them, describing the quality of His self-giving love for others. That New Testament love embodied in Jesus is a love that is always seeking actively the wellbeing and the best life possible for other persons. It's an attitude and approach to people that seeks nothing in return. It's selfless. It loves whether or not the one who's being loved responds. It's a quality of love that, is really love no strings attached, asking nothing in return. It simply affirms, I give myself to you because you're God's child, and I'm God's child, and I've been loved by God. And I'm called to share this love, and I want to share this love with you because you're somebody. You have worth and dignity and value, and I give myself to you and for you and with you in the world. Oh, this love is better understood in relationships and embodiments than it is in

verbal definitions. Love is the good Samaritan crossing the road to minister to a Jew who has been beaten up by robbers and left to die. The Samaritan leans over the Jew, though he knows this Jew despises him and feels that he's been cursed if the shadow of a Samaritan falls upon him. He leans over to minister to this man, though this man is the one who has made him an outcast. But expecting nothing in return. He ministers to this man beside the road, that this man might have healing. Love is the father of the prodigal son running down the road to meet the boy who's coming home, embracing him. Welcome home, son. The son has abused everything the father has given him. He's misused all that the father's taught him. And yet, the father says, "Welcome home, son. Here's a robe for you, ring for your finger, shoes for your feet. I want you back in the family." Love is Jesus saying to a man like Zacchaeus, again who is an outcast, everybody despises him. This is Jesus saying, "Zacchaeus, you are somebody. You have worth, you have dignity, you have value. Come down from that tree. I'm going home with you. I care about you." Love is Jesus saying to a woman who was about to be stoned for breaking the law, "I do not condemn you. Go and sin no."