



of hosts ♪ ♪ He is the King of glory ♪ ♪ He is the King of glory ♪ ♪ He is the King of glory ♪ ♪ Amen ♪

- Our scripture lesson from the Old Testament is from the book of Isaiah 58:6-12. "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the thorns of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house? When you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing spirit shall spring up speedily. Your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call and the Lord will answer. You will cry and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the parting of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness, and your gloom be as the noon day. And the Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your desire with good things, and make your bones strong. And you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters fail not. And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt. You shall raise up the foundations of many generations. You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in." Will the congregation rise for the reading of the gospel? The New Testament lesson is from the book of Matthew 6:6-18. "And when you pray, go into your room, and shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And in praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Pray then like this: 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 debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses. And when you fast, do not look dismal like the hypocrites for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men, but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." So ends the reading of our scripture. (soft piano music) ♪ (indistinct) ♪

Priest: As one body of believers in Christ, let us join together in the affirmation of faith. "We are not alone, we live in God's world. We believe in God who has created and is creating, who has come in the truly human Jesus to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit. We trust God who calls us to be the church, to celebrate life and its fullness, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus crucified and risen, our Judge and our hope in life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God." The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And with your spirit.

Priest: Let us pray. Roger Ortmyer, whose writings many of you know, has written a prayer of Thanksgiving and of acknowledgement of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ over all of life. And I have chosen that prayer as a prayer of Thanksgiving and grace for this morning, and invite you to join with me in one voice as together we pray. "Christ is the Lord of all. Christ is the Lord of the smallest atom. Christ is the Lord of outer

space. Christ is the Lord of the constellations. Christ is the Lord of every place, of the farthest star, of the coffee bar, of the length of the Berlin Wall, of the Village Green, of the Asian scene. Christ is the Lord of all. Christ is the Lord of the human heartbeat. Christ is the Lord of every breath. Christ is the Lord of our existence. Christ is the Lord of life and death, in the city store by the surfing shore, where the people flee of the refugee, Christ is the Lord of all. Christ is the Lord of our thoughts and feelings. Christ is the Lord of all we plan. Christ is the Lord of our decision. Christ is the Lord of all we are. In the local street where the people meet, in the church or the nearby hall, in the factory, in the family, Christ is the Lord of all. Christ is the Lord of our love and courtship. Christ is the Lord of husband and wife. Christ is the Lord of the things we care for. Christ is the Lord of all our life. For the presence and the grace of Christ, our Lord, we give thanks just now." And oh God, we offer now a prayer for those whom we are to love and for whom we are to pray, for those in whom the pulse of life grows weak, for the sick and infirmed, who miss the brightness of the sun by day, and the beauty, all the majestic beauty of the moon we have seen these nights by night. For those overworked, who do not take time to relax and have no joy in leisure, for those who have no work and thus no joy from the labors of their hands. We pray, oh God, for those who have struggled and suffered this week, for those who have known disappointment and frustration, for those who have made decisions they should not have and have not made decisions which they should have. We pray for those who learn and those who teach, for those who receive and those who give, for those who hurt, oh God, and those who heal. In the name of Christ who cares, lift up the fallen, dry the tears of those who cry, heal the wounded, support the weary, and let us know, oh God, that your presence is near every moment. And now we pray for ourselves, oh God, keep us from being too self-centered, from thoughtless destruction of life and property, from intentionally harming anyone or anything on your good earth. Help us each to grow continually in, and through your grace. As our minds grow wiser, make our hearts kinder. As our bodies grow stronger, make our hearts more sensitive. As our world grows smaller, make our hearts even larger. As our neighbor grows colder, make our hearts even warmer. May we, oh God, know and respond to the living presence of Christ, and whose strength and mercy surely we want day by day. Hear us as we pray the words which we heard from Your Holy Word. As we pray the prayer which our Lord Jesus taught us to pray saying, 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." The last couple of Sundays we have had a special announcement in the bulletin, encouraging you to write to your Congresspersons and your Senators, to express your concerns about the hungry of the world. And we have indicated that on this day, those of you who have written such letters will have the privilege of placing those letters in the offering plate, and having them presented to God on the altar this day. And so I invite you this morning to share your concern in this manner. And as the offering is received later in the service, to express this concern by making that your gift to God for this day. As we approach a few days' break for many of you, and as some of you make plans to travel and to go home for some good food again, and for renewing some ties back home, we wish for you happy times, good times, and we encourage you to be patient as you go back home. Remember, mom and dad haven't been here learning these two months as you have been, so help them to grow as you share with them. We wish for your safe travel, and being refreshed and renewed next week, we look forward to having you back here. John Berglund, the preacher for this morning is, as our son likes to call him Mr. Horseman, he is among other things, a good horseman, he is a pilot, he is a tennis player, and sometime in private, I'll tell you about some games he and I have had. He

is a counselor to many persons in the divinity school and beyond, he is a committed churchman, one whose faith has enlightened and inspired many persons across the country. He's been at Duke now a little over two years. And I think I can say that no one has endeared himself or herself more quickly or more genuinely to the students in the divinity school, than has John Berglund. It's a privilege for me to consider him a friend, and colleague, and coworker in The Church of Jesus Christ. And it is our privilege this morning, to hear as John Berglund brings to us the word of God for this day. John, we welcome you and hear you gladly.

John: Thank you very much. And may I simply greet you in the name of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, or with this further word, "thanks be to God." Yes, thanks be to God for this day. Thanks be to God for this university. Thanks be to God for this great cathedral. Thanks be to God for this choir. Thanks be to God for His Word of life. And let us pray. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in Thy sight, oh Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen. Preachers are given to saying very obvious things. This you all know. It's the day of the feast. Well, the week of the feast, Thanksgiving, we call it. I'm not sure that really is the central activity of the day. It's probably food, is it not? Or family? King football. Thanksgiving. Well, this indeed is the week of the feast, and you all know it. Well, you can't pick up the papers and look at the advertisements and miss it. You can't walk through a supermarket and not knowing from the specials, "oh this indeed!" And furthermore, it's just a dominant thing in our own agendas. We all look forward to a Thanksgiving break. This is the week of the feast, and this is the week of the famine. All of this is the month of the famine. This is the year of the famine. This is the age of the famine, and we know that too. We know it again because the media continually bring into our own living rooms, even to our own banquet tables, the pictures of little children, their bodies bloated from malnutrition, their eyes vacant because there is no hope there, their lives shortened because of the marching famine. This is the age of the famine, and this is the week of the fast. Well, it's a strange Thanksgiving week. It began with a resolution from Senator Mark Hatfield in November of 1974 a year ago, and then the Senate passed this resolution, that Monday November 24th, 1975, that's tomorrow, would be known as a National Day of Fasting. The purpose of it all is that there may be some identification with the hunger that stalks the world. And so I would have you consider today the wise counsel of Isaiah and Matthew in these terms, "not when you feast, when you fast." And Isaiah who is addressing this council, to some people who were saying, "we get into all of this religious stuff, we have these fasts." Well, even the feast days, but especially the fasts, when there is supposed to be some self modification that will be pleasing to God. Was there hope that it would reach heaven? I have the same hope that a congregation gathered here today, confessing their faith in words like, "we believe in God," affirming faith by saying, "we are not alone," would dare to believe that there could be that spiritual activity, be it Thanksgiving or fasting, that would indeed be pleasing to God, would reach to heaven. It seems clear to me in reading Isaiah, that the first movement towards any of that ought to be confession. It ought to be a consideration of the famine. You know how I respond when I hear about the famine? First of all, "oh God, it's a good thing to be in America." And then I respond with the cynicism about it all, "hey, we've heard it all before." And every time I hear it announced by some sociologist or some religious leader, it all just sounds like, "ain't it awful?" "Ah, you Americans are such self-indulgent people, using more fuel than you really are to use. You come together on Thanksgiving Sundays, considering fasts, and you probably have overweight preachers talking to overfed congregations. Ain't it awful?" It is. And following my cynicism about the rehearsing of the sin of it all, is the cynicism that just marches on my awareness, that so many of the poor of the world are poor, and hungry, and starving because of the

wrongness of their leaders, and because of their own foolishness. "I'll not get into debates about those cows in a starving India. Let me simply speak confessionally. I think how tragic, how absolutely tragic, when our surplus food finally reaches the starving nations of India and Africa, and then rots there because it's so poorly stored and so poorly managed. And the rats that eat half of it, and the bureaucrats that get rich from it, and furthermore, aren't they really stupid? Is that not why they starve? Can't anybody take a seed, blessed seed and put it in the soil, blessed soil and rejoice in sun, blessed sun? And surely there will be the harvest, well, keep the weeds away and do a bit of irrigation. They starve because they're stupid, and selfish, and foolish, and shortsighted. We of course stand in the Protestant ethic. We work, we save, we are thrifty, we are wise." But, come with me, won't you? To a place called Golden Valley. It's in Pakistan, on the edge of a widening desert. Golden Valley, it sounds like a nice place to live. I can almost see my name there on the address, on the mailbox. John Berglund, Golden Valley. I don't wanna live there. Well, it didn't rain there for seven years, and fathers who were to care for their families are in a stupor from their own malnutrition, and so they just sit there in the dust. Mothers try to scrape up a bit to eat, even try to scarp up a bit of water in a pitcher from a dried up stream, some water that they can drink. And the children; starving children, dying children, searching the dust beneath the Taman tree, looking for that tiny seed, the drugs of which will steal the pain of hunger in their stomach. It didn't rain there for seven years. I ask you brothers and sisters, what would this garden of Eden that we call North Carolina look like if it didn't rain here for seven years? Oh, that's some cause for Thanksgiving. Thank God we live. No, I want you to keep the feast. I want you to consider the famine, but I want you to keep the feast. Last year at Thanksgiving time in the divinity school at York Chapel in one of the worship services, Dean Clellan came. He read there a beautiful poem written by (indistinct), once editor of the New York Times Magazine. And the thrust of it all was simply in that ravaged little colony in north America, where people were looking towards a bleak winter, remembering that half of their colony already was dead. (indistinct) began to say, "we must surely fast." "Well, we must fast. Look at the bleakness of this winter, look at the poverty of our storehouses, look at how weak we are, and how inclined to death and illness. Listen to that icy wind, listen to the howl of wolves. We must fast so that we can get God on our side and stand against this and in that moment." One of the smaller men in the midst, but standing taller than any of them because of his faith and insight, rose and said, "I descent, I'll not fast at all." And then the man began to speak about life, about the majestic qualities of life, about rivers that still flowed towards the sea, about seeds that still brought forth life, about fish in the ocean for the catching, and fuel in the forest for the cutting. And he called them to a feast, not a fast, and asked them, "Will you not please celebrate? Will you not please celebrate all of the vibrant forces of life, and receive it not with any sullenness at all, but with joy, and thanksgiving, and hope?" A friend of mine who teaches in another university spent a sabbatical in India, traveling, studying. I had a chance to see him in August, and he'd been back from about six months there. I remember hearing a missionary preacher not long ago, speak about going to Calcutta. That's right close to the famine. Well, that's where the city is crowded with the refugees. That's where the chaos seems to dominate. They came speaking to this missionary preacher saying, "Well, you're in India now, you might as well go to Calcutta. Get your heart broke the first week." And so I said to my friend back from India, "Did you go to Calcutta?" "Oh yes," he said. And my next remark, "Did it leave you depressed?" "No." And I thought, "what kind of hardness is this?" And then he went on and said, "No, not depressed at all. In fact, it left me encouraged." "How can that be? Didn't you get on the right streets? Didn't you see the homeless, hungry refugee? Didn't you see the starvation, the death? Don't you know about the truck that comes through the street early in the morning to gather up dead like cordwood?" "Not depressed,

encouraged." And so I waited. And he spoke words chosen quite deliberately. Yes, encouraged by the majestic power of life. So absolutely obvious in the contrast of the famine. I call you to that today. I call you to remember again, seed, blessed seed, soil, blessed soil and sun, and rain, and life, and God. I would have you pray prayers of Thanksgiving this week. May I give you one? Well, it came from an old man who had spent most of his life close to the soil. And I heard him pray at one day in a farm home, on the land that had supported his family, his life, his children. For the prayer, simply this: "Oh God, forgive us of our sins and make us truly thankful. Amen." It's a good prayer. Pray it when you feast. And when you fast; when you fast, that's the way the gospel of Matthew was read here in our hearing. When you fast, do we fast? Well, a generation ago, I would say, "no, we don't fast in America." Well, there was Gandhi fasting a generation ago for some kind of justice. 10 years ago, did we fast? The only fast I could remember 10 years ago was a brave young girl named DeCourcy Squire, who was keeping a fast in Cincinnati jail trying to call some attention to justice. When you fast, oh, it's more right for us this year than ever before, is it not? For now we have the National Day of Fasting, and it is tomorrow. When you fast, I hope you will, for identification with the hungry of the world. And when you do it, how will you do it? You realize, of course, that fasting can in itself be self-indulgent. Well, I think I just like to indulge myself in those feelings. I think I may in fact feel good because I feel bad. Fasting may in fact be self-indulgent, or fasting may again be simply magical. That modification, that discipline that somehow will be pleasing, what God is that? Wont you hear again the counsel of the Prophet Isaiah and the counsel of Matthew? "When you fast, don't do it for yourselves. Don't do it even to be seen with people for any witness. When you fast, do it in ways that will seek the reward of God himself. Keep the fast that will reach heaven. And how is that? Well, you always must be God's voice. And it's a fast like this that I required. A day of modification like this, that you lose the fetters of injustice, that you untie the knots of the yoke, that you snap every yoke, and you set free those who have been crushed. It's sharing your food with the hungry, it's taking homeless poor into your house, clothing the naked when you meet them, and never evading your duty with any kinsfolk. Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and then you will grow healthy like a wound newly healed." Why don't you pretend with me please that you're being born today, just today, a brand new baby. How do you think it will be? Will it be in the maternity ward over here at Duke? Will you be born to this well-established home with a nursery already waiting and parents well employed? With all the possibility of good education, Duke University Sunday, and then a promising career? If you're born today, look, join the human race, won't you? Chances are you will not be born White. You probably will not be born in America, the odds are that you will not be. It's not likely that you will be born rich. No. Most of the children born today will be born to the very poor. 40,000 of them will be born today in India, and most of them will die. I believe that God intended this child to grow beautiful. And the flesh; well, the flesh of this new born child will be parasite ridden, and disease ridden, and sick all its life from malnutrition, and then it becomes rotten, stinking, decaying in its death. If I was a child born today, I don't think I'd be captivated by your thanksgivings. Don't think I'd be moved very much by your fast, but this would move me, your absolute devotion to justice. Yes, even a devotion that will move you to write a letter this week to your congressmen saying, "we would like for you to support The Right to Food bill, now before House and Senate." And then my brothers and sisters, then indeed, it may be a fast that reaches heaven. And you will grow strong, like a wound newly healed. Let us pray. Oh God, forgive us of our sins and make us truly thankful. Amen. (soft piano music) ♪ (indistinct) ♪ (gentle piano music) ♪ (indistinct) ♪ (gentle piano music) ♪ (indistinct) ♪

Priest: Oh God, forgive us our sins and make us truly thankful. Amen. (gentle piano music) ♪ (indistinct) ♪

Priest: And what does the Lord require of us? To feast, possibly. To fast, perhaps. But to do justice, surely. The grace of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, the love of God, the Father, the communion and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you and with those whom you love now and forever. ♪ Amen ♪ (gentle piano music)