

(congregation sings indistinctly) (energetic organ music) (congregation sings indistinctly) (energetic organ music) (congregation sings indistinctly)

- My dearly beloved, let us have this affirmation as it prepares our hearts for our prayer of confession. This is the message which we have heard from Him and proclaim to you that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, His son, cleanses us from all sin. In this faith, let us all pray.

- We confess to you, oh God, these our sins, and offer our repentance for not thinking deeply, for being too intense, for being inattentive to your word and your voice, for thinking we have the whole truth, for lack of imagination, for lack of feeling and intercession for the needs of our families, the oppressed, the hungry, those in temptation, and those without hope, for an uncritical attitude to our own membership in a society of affluence, for ignoring other people, for taking ourselves too seriously, for our sins of exhibition, for our sins of inhibition, for our failure to think and pray and act deeply for the mission and unity of the church, for trying to imprison you in words and institutions.

- Now hear these words of assurance, wait for the Lord and be strong and let your heart take courage. Yay, wait for the Lord. For the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and save the crushed in spirit. For who is likened to God? Who pardons iniquity and passes over transgression. He does not retain His anger forever because He delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion upon us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot. He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Amen. (slow organ music) (energetic organ music) (congregation sings indistinctly) The Old Testament lesson this morning is taken from the book of Exodus 3:1-6. Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. And he looked and lo the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses." And he said, "Here am I." Then he said, "Do not come near. Put off your shoes from your feet for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God. The New Testament lesson is taken from the gospel according to Saint Mark, chapter eight, verses 34 through 37. And he called to Him the multitude with His disciples and said to them, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life?" Here endeth the reading of the lesson. May God bless this reading of his holy scripture. (energetic organ music) (congregation sings indistinctly) Now let us affirm our faith by saying together this affirmation in unison.

- 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 true man, Jesus, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by his spirit. We trust him. He calls us to be in his church, to celebrate his presence, 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. Amen.

- You may be seated. Now may the Lord be with you.

- And with your spirit.

- Let us all pray. Oh Lord our God. Thou who art the author and giver of life and all good things in it, we thank thee this day for all thy mercy and for thy loving care over all thy creatures. We bless thee for the gift of our life, for the going and coming on this university campus, for all the forces and powers and influences that conspired to bring us here. We thank thee for the friendships that we are making here, for the new discoveries that are coming about ourselves and others, and about the great world thou hast made. We thank thee for the opportunities to be stimulated by new ideas and by people who serve noble causes. We thank thee for these great days of the fall time. When we see the handiwork written large, and when nature is the blossom that thou doest wear in thy (indistinct) as we go about. Oh Lord, thou who does so bestow upon us these ingredients of our life and livelihood, do thou except the gratitude of our hearts. Almighty and most merciful Father, we pray this morning for those who are in distress. Over 4,000 families, maybe yay even 7,000 have now been ravaged by a storm and death. How can they say there is faith, oh Lord? Unless thou doest by the Holy Spirit inspire them to new faith in these moments. Help us in our hearts of compassion to join vicariously with them to institute and incarnate faith where there is need for it. Oh Lord, in our midst, there are those who are lonely in solitude, who are homesick and missed some that they love. Let the wonder and mystery of thy love abide with them today, so that as they go back to their dormitory rooms and their places of abode, they may know that thou doest march with them and that thou art also with those they love. We pray also, our Father, for our country and those who lead it. Let the truth of thy wisdom abide with them, that they may institute those things which will ennoble us as the people and serve thy kingdom. And, oh Lord, thou who has loosened the brooding spirit of Christ upon us, let Him dwell in the midst of us today. We're trying to carry out our duties each day, but sometimes, they seem more than we can bear. So let the power of your spirit lay claim upon us now to call out of us the hidden strengths that's there, to call out the fullest measure of devotion, to call out the will to achieve. Oh liberating spirit of Christ, free us from the bondage of a narrow life these days, a sensuous life, a useless life. And oh redeeming spirit of Christ, reconstruct the ugly and vain elements in our inner life so that we may have the joy of a liberated courage, the confidence of a new faith and a hope for your sustaining presence forevermore. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord we pray, who taught us when praying together to say, 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 and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

- In the name of God, our creator, redeemer and sustainer. Amen. What does Tertullian have to say about

the major question to be asked today? His question is, what does Jerusalem have to say to Athens? Tertullian was a second century man, probably a lawyer, a learned man steeped in Greek philosophy and thought, who became a Christian when he was about 40. He was troubled by the problems of heresy facing the church and he was troubled by the lack of strong moral rigor within the church. He saw people missing the real concerns as they nitpicked over what he considered trivial and unimportant issues. In a imitation of the method of philosophy, they missed the mark of the Christian. What he actually asked was, "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?" He was not anti-intellectual, not a blind irrationalist, but was convinced that unrestrained speculation can lead a person far afield and that the actual revelation of God was what was important. And his understanding of Revelation was that Revelation was located in history and not in speculation of what God can do. He granted that God could do anything, but what was important was what God had chosen to do. What has Jerusalem to say to Athens is still being asked. And for some, the answer is quite simple, nothing. These are the people who see the language and the arena of the church and the language and the arena of the university as so distinct and so separate that there can be no conversation, no dialogue. Others would say, "nothing," because they see that the church has lost its right to speak to the university because they believe that the church abdicated its responsibility. And when it did, the public look to the university to fill the vacuum which was left. And all those with a slight variation would say, "nothing," because they see the church is so in awe of the university that instead of trying to speak to it, it is trying to imitate it and hence become Athens. What does Jerusalem have to say to Athens? Any definition of the responsibility of the church and the responsibility of the university makes plain and obvious, both the distinctiveness of each, but also the (indistinct), the mutual responsibility and the interdependence of the two. First, a definition of the church in broad terms, rooted in our biblical tradition. When you understand the responsibility of the church as being to continue the work of Jesus the Christ, you get very specific clues as to what this means. When you read Luke's account of the opening of Jesus' ministry in Nazareth, when Jesus read in the synagogue from Isaiah, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind and to set, at liberty, those who are oppressed." Now, when we read the Gospels, there is no way we can spiritualize this or interpret this in terms that would indicate that the church should not be concerned with all dimensions of our lives. Now the clues are the same when you hear Jesus's response to the lawyer's question, "Which is the greatest commandment?" "You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Or Paul Layman's recent definition, which is used by many as a definitive understanding of the mission of the church. That being, to do what is necessary to make and keep human life human. Now, as a broad definition of the responsibility of the university, hear our selection from the Carnegie Commission's Report on the purpose and performance of higher education in the United States in which they combine the classical understanding with a contemporary perspective. Quoting from this report, "The main purposes of higher education in the United States today, and for the prospective future, all. First, the provision of opportunities for the intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and skilled development of individual students and the provision of campus environments which can constructively assist students in their more general developmental growth. Second, the advancement of human capability and society at large. Third, the enlargement of educational justice for the post-secondary age group. A goal which would make higher education available for all persons and not just an elite group. Fourth, the transmission and advancement of learning and wisdom. And last, the critical evaluation of society through individual thought and persuasion for the sake

of society's self renewal." Now, when we see the church seeking to love and care for the neighbor, we know we need adequate knowledge of our need, and of our neighbor's need and of the world in which we live. And we need to develop the necessary skills to meet these needs. And certainly one of these needs is our need for meaningful worship. That is precisely at the extent to which we take seriously the commandment of love and the service which it demands, that we are bound to take seriously the task of higher education as it finds expression in the inquiries of the various disciplines within the university. What does Jerusalem have to say to Athens is both an institutional question and a personal question. There are many times when the institutional question must be addressed from this pulpit. And the institutional question may more important be addressed as a outgrowth of the Word from this pulpit. And small groups who are seeking and questioning to get specific direct instructions for how to act on very specific concerns that face the institution. One such group is found in the wise task force on institutional racism. You know of others and there should be more. Today, we will consider the personal question, especially as it relates to those of us who are citizens of Athens. And we hear the Word as it comes to us from the Old and New Testament lessons. First, take off your shoes. The place you are standing is holy ground. We are people who have done away with sacred time and space. We have lost our sense of holy, our sense of awe, our feeling of wonder. This is sometimes even more acute within the university with its concern for the rational dimension of our nature, with the critical process. And so, we who learn to think, to be critical, to analyze, to take apart, to refute, find that such work can become imperialistic. And the ultimate, the end of all our being can become the intellect, the mind, the rational, the logical. Now, when we do away with sacred space, we fall under the tyranny of the rational. Then all our life, what we do must contain all of its meaning and being within itself, there is no word from the other. When no space or time can reveal the other, then all space and time becomes meaningless, empty, boring, powerless. So the university, instead of being a community of people, creative, dynamic, caring, concerned people searching for truth in all of its dimensions, truth, which can free us and restore the world tends to come a place of separation with walls of competition, infighting, boredom, drabness, dull, routine, death. So the word that Jerusalem must say to us, over and over and over, is that our life, this place, can be full of meaning, can be of value, is important. In Sam Keen's "Apology for Wonder", he describes wonder events as happenings or revelatory occurrences which appear as if by chance, bearing some new meaning or promise. And which, in some sense, are mysterious. Using mystery and the sense of our being personally involved in the event, of being comprehended by truth, rather than observing truth at a distance. In wonder, we are presented with a gift of meaning. In wonder, we have the foundation of our values. Value and holy can be seen as equivalents, the dimension of life, which provides the organizational principle for all of life. Value and holy can be seen as equivalents, the dimension of life, which provides the organizational principle for all of life. Now, the wonder events are not just novel, sensational or spectacular. The true wonder does not need the constant titillation of the sensational to keep it alive, rather it is most often called forth by a confrontation with the mysterious depth of meaning at the heart of the familiar, the ordinary, the burning bush. Now in no sense is this wonder in opposition to or denial of the intellect or the rational nature. The creative thinker finds that wonder and humility grows in proportion to knowledge. Now, the response to wander can be contemplation, which leads to the avoidance of the tyranny of the already known, which then allows for the novel and the unique to create categories which will expand our knowledge. Another response to wonder is the response to the other, to the bush, to the event, which is not one of a desire to dominate, to use, to possess, rather to learn, to celebrate the presence, to be open, receptive, caring. Now those of you who are familiar with the biblical

stories which describe these wonder events, know that the record never shows such an event as turning the person in on him or herself. Usually, the Word comes very much as a demand to care for the neighbor. And in the story of Moses and the burning bush, God speaks, affirming the history of the people of Israel, and then talks about, "The affliction of my people. I know their sufferings and have come to deliver them and you are needed, Moses." So the Word that Jerusalem must say to us, over and over and over, is that our life, this place can be full of meaning, can be of value, is important. And we discover this as we allow ourselves to see the burning bush, to hear the words spoken to us from the other. We cannot speak the Word to ourselves, we must hear it from the other. Now we do not receive the Word from every person, every bush or every event, but God can speak to us in any bush, in any person, in any event. And the word from Jerusalem is to sensitize ourselves to this possibility, and if necessary, to change our orientation so that we may see and hear and become whole people. Now when we lose our sense of awe and wonder and the holy and hence have no value, no organizing principle for our lives, we are driven to find meaning in places that offer no lasting meaning. It's accepted in our society that we earn our worth and our value by our position in our society, our money, our power, and this is underscored in the university in the need to make good grades and with the concern with rank and title and position. We are driven to find meaning in places that offer no lasting meaning. And so we hear the second Word from Jerusalem. "You who seek to save your life will surely lose it." Now, while this passage was written to be understood in a very literal sense, reminding the early Christians that their temptation to escape persecution and hence save their lives, would in fact mean, in the most important sense, they would actually lose our lives. It is not dishonest to the intent of the scripture to see that this statement is also relevant to the student whose goal is to save his or her life in the university, which is translated into caring more about grades than learning. If your most important goal is making an A, then you will see every person as being helpful or detrimental to you getting that A and then you will use them accordingly. And the Word from Jerusalem is, "You who seek to save your life will surely lose it." Some of you know Pirsig's book, "The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance". He describes an experience he had mountain climbing. He could not make it to the top of the Himalayas. Though he had the physical strength, that was not enough. He had the intellectual motivation, that was not enough. He was trying to use the mountain for his own selfish purposes. He says that to the untrained eye, ego climbing and selfless climbing may appear identical. Both kinds of climbers placed one foot in front of the other. Both breathe in and out at the same rate, both stop when tired, but what a difference. The ego climber is like an instrument out of adjustment. He puts his foot down an instant too soon or too late. He's likely to miss a beautiful passage through the trees. He looks up the trail to see what's ahead even when he knows what's ahead because he just looked up a second before. When he talks, his talk is forever, somewhere else, something else. He rejects the hill, is unhappy with it. He wants to be farther up the trail, but when he gets there, he will be just as unhappy because then it will be the here. What he's looking for, what he wants, is all around him, but he doesn't want it because it is all around him. Every steps and effort, both physically and spiritually, because he imagines his goal to be external and distant. And he never reaches the top of the mountain. Now the Word that Jerusalem has to say to these mountain climbers, to those of you who are paralyzed by the fear of not making it to med school, to all of us who are caught up in some paralyzing situation of our own making, is the good news, the good news of the gospel that can be heard in Tillich's sermon, You Are Accepted. We try to buy our worth, our value, earn our acceptance, try to save our lives with our minds, our looks, our grades, our cleverness, but it doesn't work. The word that comes to us, the freeing word, the good news is proclaimed to us from Jerusalem through the Christ is, you are accepted. Accepted by that which is

