

(Downe House Choral singing) (church music) (Downe House Choral singing) (church music) (Downe House Choral singing) (church music) (Downe House Choral singing) (church music) (Downe House Choral singing) (church music) (Downe House Choral singing) (church music)

- Grace and peace to you in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. We welcome you to this service of holy communion here at Duke University Chapel, on this fifth Sunday after Pentecost. If you're a visitor to campus and there's any way that we may assist you during your time here on campus, please let us here at the chapel know. Our preacher for this morning's service is the Reverend Dr. William H. Willimon, dean of the Chapel. And our elector is Dr. James Ferguson, member of the congregation at Duke Chapel. Our guest organist is Miss Jane Lynch. We extend special greetings to our visiting choir this morning, Downe House Choral, from Berkshire, England, in County Cork, who are assisting in the leadership of our service. They will be performing a concert this afternoon at 5:00 PM here in the chapel and the public is cordially invited. We are indebted to the girls, all ranging in age from 16 to 18, to their director, Mr. Trevor R. O. Selby, and to their accompanist, Miss Rosemary Evans, who journeyed across the Atlantic to be with us here at the chapel today. Now let us stand as we sing praise to God together. (church music) (congregation and Downe House Choral singing)

- Let us join in the prayer of confession, found on page 891 in your hymnals. You may be seated.

- (in unison with congregation) Almighty and most merciful God, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. But thou, oh Lord, have mercy upon us. Spare thou those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou those who are penitent; according to thy promises declared in Christ Jesus, our Lord, and grant, oh most merciful God, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life to the glory of thy holy name, amen.

- If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- (in unison with congregation) Thanks be to God.

- (in unison with congregation) Open our hearts and minds, O 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 Epistle is written in the seventh chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, beginning at the 14th verse. We know that the law is spiritual but I am carnal, sold under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good.

So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me that is in my flesh. I can will what is right but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self. But I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. How wretched I am. Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Here ends the reading of the Epistle.

- (in unison with congregation) Thanks be to God.

- The holy gospel is written in the 11th chapter of Saint Matthew, beginning at the 25th verse. At that time Jesus declared, "I thank thee father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes. Yay father, for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my father and no one knows the son except the father. And no one knows the father except the son and anyone to whom the son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Here ends the reading of the gospel.

- (in unison with congregation) Thanks be to God.

- I know that many of you are here on vacation and I admire you for your faithfulness. Because even though you're on vacation, you have come to church. Vacations are usually not times that we think of to do our accustomed duties. For vacations are times, as we say, to get away from it all. To set aside time from life's daily difficulties. To unburden. Where there are usually alarm clocks, there's now sleeping until 10:00. Where there is usually Bran Flakes at breakfast, there's now jelly filled donuts. And we exchange the duties of home or office or classroom for the duties of unfolding the canvas chair for a nap on the beach. God bless vacations. This marvelous, annual time of unburdening. But strangely enough, vacations can be difficult. My first ministerial job was as a chaplain at a family campground in Myrtle Beach. And I ministered, don't laugh, I ministered to over 2,000 families that camped in our campgrounds over each weekend in the summer. These families that attempted to get away from it all. And yet, I found that many of these families were jumping out of the stress of the everyday frying pan into the vacation fire. Sullen teenagers who wanted to be anywhere but with their boring parents... sunburn... One of the greatest challenges that we campground chaplains had were ministering to the family fights of our happy campers. (laughter) Have you ever tried to have a marital argument in a tent? (laughter) Sometimes vacations relieve us of one burden only to put on our backs another. Well, in today's gospel, Jesus needs a vacation. In the Galilean cities, Jesus has experienced hostility and rejection, only rejection. In great fatigue and desperation, Jesus blows his top. "To what shall I compare this generation?" he asks. "You're like a bunch of children." He tells these cities that have rejected him that on the judgment day it will be no better for them than it was for Sodom. It wasn't one of Jesus' better moments. But he was tired. He was just tired of rejection. Exhausted by hard work without results. He was tired, dog tired, dead tired. He needs a break, a time to unburden. He needs a vacation. And it is right there, interestingly, that today's gospel begins. At that time, Jesus declared-- at that time, right at

the point of his own exhaustion and fatigue-- at that time, Jesus declared, "I thank thee, Father, that thou hast hidden these things "from the wise and understanding. "Come to me. "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden "and I will give you rest. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. "And you will find rest for your souls, "for my yoke is easy "and my burden is light." These are among the most beloved of all Jesus' words. "Come to me, all ye who are heavy laden." It's an invitation to vacation. To unburdening. And we need it. In even the most invigorated life, there always comes that day, that day when our noble career in teaching is just one more lecture to prepare. Our interesting job in sales is just one more dingy airport. About 3:00 in the afternoon when your dedication to the joys of motherhood is reduced to feelings that you would do anything to get away from the kids. You feel that you would just die with one more letter to type, one more dish to be washed. It gets old. Burnout is the accepted social disease of our age. Sometimes religion is a burden. Going to church, reading the bible, family devotions. This can become tiresome. No more than just a duty, a habit kept going by inertia rather than commitment. And I have been known to pray, "Lord help me through another Easter." "Oh it's Christmas again, great." "Four services, one week. "Well, let's get it over." Christmas, Easter. And probably this was the sort of burden of which Jesus was speaking. Later in Matthew's gospel, Jesus complained about those religious leaders of his day that just used religion to heap burdens on people's backs. But they wouldn't lift a finger to take those burdens off. The blessing of religion can become a burden. There are people who spend their whole lives getting over the damage done by religion. Jesus unburdened people: "Come to me, all ye who labor and heavy laden. "I'll give you rest." Now that's a message which is congenial to our age. I was reading just last week someone doing a study of young professional people. Young, high achieving, professional people. And when asked, "What would you like "to have more of in your life "than anything else at this time?" they said they would like to have more time to sleep. But there is another message in today's text which may not be quite as congenial or even understandable. Jesus goes on to say, "Take my yoke upon you. "Learn from me." Wait a minute, did Jesus say "yoke"? Do you find it surprising that Jesus offers tired, burdened people that which they seem least to need? I mean, what labored, heavy laden folk need is a vacation, not a yoke. A yoke--a yoke is a work instrument. It's put around the necks of oxen to help them pull better. Jesus' yoke may be easy and his burden may be light but look, a yoke is still a yoke and a burden's still a burden. Just right at the point that we expect Jesus to offer a vacation, he offers a yoke different from the one we have around our necks. A new burden from the one we currently bear. Instead of escape from burdens, Jesus offers tired people another burden. A yoke. "Take my yoke upon you, my burden is light." In one of his sermons, Martin Luther noted that only Jesus could say, "Come to me all you who are heavy laden," in one breath and, "Take my yoke around your neck," in the next. Jesus speaks of giving us rest by placing a burden upon us because Jesus knows that the issue in life is not if we shall be burdened, but rather, which burdens shall we bear. Look at the burdens that we bear. As a pastor, I spent most of my day, I think, comforting, supporting people who were cracking under the yoke of affluence. The two cars, the big mortgage. It makes you wonder how many of the emotional, physical illnesses of our age are due to economic overextension? "Honey, the dishwasher's not working "and by the way, the hot water heater's on the blink. "You wait here until the plumber calls." Isn't it ironic we bought all this stuff to unburden our lives? How ironic that we end up servicing our machines rather than having our machines serve us. I wait for the plumber, therefore I am. (laughter) Take my 10 years of installment payments upon your shoulders. How to unburden? When I was a pastor in North Myrtle Beach, a great segment of my congregation consisted of retired persons who had moved to the beach to play golf. Do you know what a great burden it can be to have nothing else to do all

day but have a good time? Golf isn't much fun when you have to play it. "Time off" ceases to be relaxing when the only time you got is "off." Who told our society that the chief end of humanity is retirement in a condo in Florida? Irresponsibility is ugly, whether it occurs in a 70 year old or a 17 year old. My point is that the vast personal and social burden of our methods of unburdening has become a great burden. Not long ago, I did a book on the phenomenon of burnout among clergy. And I interviewed scores of clergy who'd burned out, called it quits, and people who counseled clergy thinking about calling it quits. And many of the clergy whom I interviewed complained of being overworked, overburdened by their work. Stressed out, crushed by the unrealistic demands of their parishioners. But forgive laypersons who wonder, "is it true that pastors have more demands "placed on their shoulders than other people?" I doubt it so. In fact, after talking with many pastors who had burned out, I decided that sometimes we feel burned out not because we've got too much to do, but because we have too much which is meaningless and unimportant to do. Life's greatest burden cannot be having too much to do because I know that some of the happiest people that you know are among the busiest. But rather, we can become exhausted by constant engagement with that which is trivial and inconsequential. So the issue cannot be if we shall be burdened, but rather, to what shall we yoke ourselves? It's not if we shall be yoked, but to whom? Jesus appears to have little interest in unburdening us so that we can be free or liberated, or self-fulfilled, self-esteemed, or all those modern infatuations which have become, for many of us, such debilitating burdens. Rather, Jesus lifts off our backs one burden so that he can place another. He removes that harness that we have forged for ourselves so that he can place around our necks his own yoke. Jesus' idea of a good vacation is not getting away from it all, but rather, taking us some place where we are given something significant to do-- namely, participation with him and his ministry to the world. Life's daily difficulties and burdens get redeemed if we can see them in some sense as vocation, as our little everyday participation in the ministry of Jesus. As Christians, we don't seek to be free from servitude. Rather, we seek freely to serve. Our goal is not to be free, but to be well used. True freedom--true freedom comes from having our heavy self-absorption lifted by another. "Make me a captive, Lord, "then I shall be free." Isn't that how the hymn puts it? I've noticed this about marriage. Before you're married, sometimes you think of marriage as a kind of limitation, a burden. It seems limiting, particularly in this society. Limiting and burdensome to be so closely yoked with another human being-- to limit one's intimacies to one other person, to be forced to account for one's movements. But often in marriage, one awakes to the realization that what one earlier perceived as a limitation or a burden has become great freedom, joy. In marriage, one is free from having to wear the mask that we wear before other people, free from those little games that we play with others. Because now that fidelity is promised forever, no matter what, the promise of marriage frees us rather than restricts us. What once was perceived as a great burden has become a blessing. But more than that, the funny thing is we discover that in keeping the promises of marriage, we have become more complex, interesting persons ourselves. In taking on this yoke, this burden to be faithful to another human being, surprise--we really have become faithful people. So that later in marriage, you don't have to say to yourself, "Now remember, I promised to be faithful "to this other human being. "I've got to try hard to bear this burden of fidelity." No, you are faithful without even having to think about it. In bearing the yoke of fidelity, you have become more faithful in such a way that now it isn't a burden anymore. Now it's really the way you are. This yoke is easy, this burden is light. So I pray for you, all of you who have come to Jesus on this hot, July day when you could have easily been on vacation. I pray for you, not that Jesus will deliver you from all burdens and free you from all yokes. But rather, that he'll give you a burden worth bearing and a yoke worth wearing. Make me a captive, Lord. Then I shall be free.

- (Rev. Nancy Ferree-Clark) The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Let us pray. O ever living God, creator of the universe. We bow before you in humility and in hope. Your ways have not been our ways, nor have your thoughts been our thoughts. Yet even in all your greatness you have shown pity on us. You understand us in our weariness, our weakness, our brokenness, and have offered us a place of rest. Strengthen us to take your yoke upon ourselves that we too may follow in the path of gentleness and lowliness of heart. O gracious God, you are the hope of the ends of the earth. Hear us while we pray. For all who hunger and thirst for your grace as they wander through a spiritual desert, for all who are searching for a place of rest and restoration, Lord in your mercy

- (in unison with congregation) hear our prayer.

- For all who hunger for food, for decent clothing, for adequate shelter, for meaningful employment, Lord in your mercy

- (in unison with congregation) hear our prayer.

- For all who practice hospitality and provide a place of rest and refreshment for others, for all who live lives committed to service and for those who provide everyday services in our communities, seen but not often heard, Lord in your mercy

- (in unison with congregation) hear our prayer.

- For all who live surrounded by winds of political and economic change, for those who lead and for those who follow, for all who speak out for the truth and for those who see no end to injustice and persecution, Lord in your mercy

- (in unison with congregation) hear our prayer.

- For all who have grown weary in the race of life, for all who outwardly appear confident and optimistic but inwardly are anxious and afraid, for the sick and for those who are unwilling to confront their illness, for all who are walking through the valley of death and for those who walk with them, Lord in your mercy

- (in unison with congregation) hear our prayer.

- O eternal God, we are convinced that all is as you say it is. That you number every hair on every head and know our every need. Strengthen us as we feast at your heavenly table never to despair, but to keep your commandments to the end, that we may find eternal rest and peace in your heavenly kingdom. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen. Christ invites to his table all who love him and who desire to

live in peace with one another. Let us stand and offer each other signs of God's peace and love. (rustling chairs) (congregation speaking over each other)

- In the spirit of thanksgiving, let us offer our gifts and ourselves unto God. (church music) (Downe House Choral singing) (church music) (Downe House Choral singing) (church music) (church music) (strong church music) (congregation and Downe House Choral singing) ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah. ♪ (congregation and Downe House Choral singing) ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah. ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah. ♪

- Please join me in prayer. The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And with your spirit.

- Lift up your hearts.

Congregation: We lift them up to the Lord.

- Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

Congregation: It is right and just.

- It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you, father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. You gave us your prophets who spoke to us your truth. In the fullness of time, you sent your only son to be for us the embodiment of truth, offering upon us the yoke and the burden of his service to the world, making us participants in his prophetic work among all people. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn. (church 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 comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you and blessed is your son, Jesus Christ, who heal, who talked, who ate with sinners and thereby revealed to us your glory. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your church. You delivered us from slavery to sin and death and made with us a new covenant by water and the spirit. On the night in which he gave himself up for us, the Lord Jesus took bread. He gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciplines and said, "Take, eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And when the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, and he gave it to his disciplines and said, "Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for 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 praises and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us proclaiming the mystery of faith.

- (in unison with congregation) Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.

- Pour out your holy spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the whole world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood. Pour

out your spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes again in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your son, Jesus Christ with the holy spirit, in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours almighty father now and forever, amen. And now with the confidence of children we pray,

- (in unison with the congregation) 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. Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, amen.

- When we break the bread, 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 and as we come, let us join in singing the hymn. (church music) (congregation and Downe House Choral singing) (congregation footsteps) (coughing) (church music) (Downe House Choral singing) (church music) (Downe House Choral singing) (church music) (footsteps) (church music)

- Please stand to receive God's blessing. (rustling of chairs) Go in peace to serve God and your neighbor in all that you do. (congregation response) The grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the holy spirit be with you all, amen. (church music) (congregation and Downe House Choral singing)

- (Rev. Nancy Ferree-Clark) Let us go forth in the name of Christ.

- (in unison with congregation) Thanks be to God. (church music) (congregation rustling)