

- In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, amen. The epithet wistful, is not one which is usually applied to this generation. We are more familiar with other descriptions, the Beat Generation, for example. But is not beat-ness simply a wistfulness that has become totally introvert, or again, the generation of angry young men? But is not anger in this sense simply a wistfulness that has gone sour? The phenomena of the beatnik and the angry young man are but the present day marks of our deep haunting sense of loneliness and homelessness in the universe. Far from concealing man's ineradicable longing for meaning and for God, they reveal it perhaps as never before in all its sharpness and poignancy. For the truth about us is that man must, and will have some God, even against his own mind and judgment. Not all the rampant secularism, nor cynical boredom of our time, can eradicate men's infinite yearnings for a higher power and a surer faith. Therefore, even today we have arrays of men still nursing the unconquerable hope, still clutching the inviolable shade. Why this cry from the last ramparts of the human soul for God? Why do we want and need the transcendent, the divine? Well, an old Hebrew thinker put it in a very concrete, and profound way when he said quite simply, that man is created in the image of God. A New Testament writer describes us merely as strangers and sojourners on the earth. A modern philosopher says in his own mode of thought and language, "Because of the structure of the universe and our position in it, we feel like cuckoos in a nest of swallows." Or listen to Pascal, "the miseries of man prove his grandeur. They are the miseries of a dethroned monarch." Or take Jung, who out of years of experience in psychoanalysis tells us that religious symbols rise quite unconsciously in the souls of men. Need we add anything more? However we try to describe or define it there is a restlessness and a disquietude of the human spirit that seems to be given to man as part of the charter of his existence. A longing for home, more acute than any exiles, a disturbing nostalgia for faith for the living God. These things are still deeply engraved in the minds and hearts of the men and women of our generation. Emile Bruneau described these things as difficulty of breathing, on gousty eye, the suffocating distress, which the soul of man feels in its separation from God. Suffocating distress, how many are experiencing that today? I, for my part do not believe for a moment that slander which is commonly held on every side in these days, that the people who fill the pews of the American churches as you fill these pews this morning, are hopelessly shallow and imperturbable, and could not be shaken out of your thoughts. I believe if I mistake not, that the people of our generation are shaken within already. I bet that if I could probe beneath the calm exterior of your existence this morning, I would find for sure, a wistfulness that knows the torment of fear and doubt. Fear about the cosmos, and fear about man himself. The Church today has to try to understand the modern temper, particularly among young people, with all their struggling uncertainty and tremulous hope. There are many young people here I'm perfectly sure who want to believe in God, who want to have faith, and are sad and despairing that they cannot find it. This wistful state of mind, which is so widely found today could be a great ally of the gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen in all its fullness. But instead, what do you find? You find that the churches' leaders are often guilty of preaching a God who is far too small to meet the desperate longings of a distracted world. And you find that the pulpit is constantly irrelevant, because it will not try to understand the papers, and the / of men's burning desire for faith in God. Don't you think that the old smooth platitudes about the goodness of God, and the on the opposite nose of history look woefully

anachronistic in the grim realities of our situation. For everywhere we look across this strict enough today, we find evidence not to support the possibility of faith in a good God and in a sure purpose for history. We find evidence rather, which denies it. For this world of ours seems to have gone quite lunatic and suicidal. Men are beginning to wonder whether Aldous Huxley wasn't right after all, when he said, "Do what you will. This world's a fiction, and is made up of contradiction." Contradiction, and absurdity. How absurd is the life of our time? Men on every side are speaking peace, and at the same time, rattling the sabers. Are piling up nuclear weapons of destruction and are foolish enough to trust in them as the surest and safest deterrent to war. The leading agency for international cooperation in our time we all the United Nations. And is not rather absurd that it should be split into two competing camps waging war in the cold sense, with each other? Is it not also a daunting thought that the Nazi myth of aryan racial purity blotted out at so great sacrifice and cost, should be succeeded by the no less implausible communist myth of the proletarian man. And what about the soft feet of good things enjoyed in our world by those who have, and the misery of millions of refugees who have nothing. I ask you how absurd can life on this planet get? That is why multitudes of people in our time have gone through a tremendous shattering of existence. They probably feel like Ivan Karamazov. "I can accept God," he says, "I cannot accept his world." I believe that young people have a right to expect in a world like this of ours, that the Church's ministers should try to understand their situation, should try to penetrate to the heart of their fears, dilemmas, and anxieties and predicaments. The agonizing wistfulness of our day and generation will not be met by any shallow preaching, but only by a gospel, which is able to confront men with the unspeakable agony of God in Jesus Christ, and in his cross. Now, there have been ages of human history when man's longing for God was a relatively cheerful and painless thing, when he could take it easy. When he didn't feel this sense that the modern man feels of suffocating distress. He didn't know the pain of alienation from God, from his world, from himself. In such epochs of human history man believed that God's ordering of the world was corroborated, and confirmed by the irresistible momentum of human progress towards the kingdom of God. This feeling in the latter 19th century produced a radiant optimism and a glowing hope. And men looked out in their world and believed it was just a matter of time before they tame the tiger in their heart, and the kingdom of God would be reached. Rhapsodizing on this theme, poets like Tennyson spread the conviction that people were standing as it were on a moving escalator, and the kingdom of God would soon be attained. The words of the poet Blake from the early years of that so hopeful century sum up the attitude of its latter part. "I will not cease from mental fight, nor should my sword sleep in my hand, 'til we have built Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land." Well, England's land is still very pleasant and very green, but no sign of the kingdom of God. In staggering contrast with all this, our own century has been pervaded by darkness and turbulence, by catastrophe and suffering on a lavish scale, by prison camps and gas chambers, and by the devilish accoutrements of nuclear destruction. One might imagine that the old belief in the inevitable process of history towards a glorious finale might have been annihilated by the acids of the history of the 20th century. But far from it, far from it. You know what we've witnessed? We've witnessed in the 20th century, how Bolshevism has taken over the semi-Christian utopianist ideal of a hither worldly kingdom of God, and has completely secularized it. So Bolshevism in our age has set man upon the high altar of its religious devotion, and worships man as its great God. The communists recite in their creed, I believe in man, the lord and creator of science. Communism is proclaiming today a kingdom of God without God. But what I want you to understand is that in the 20th century, communism has no monopoly of the worship of that most terrible of all human idols, man himself. For we in the West have participated in the

worship of mine instead of God, in our own way. In the days of economic distress, and unrest, and unemployment in the 1920s, the minors of my boyhood home in the West of Scotland used their all too abundant leisure time to build what we Scots call a cairn. A cairn, or a monument of stone, on a commanding hill above the village. They carried the stone from a nearby quarry. The interesting thing was that into the stones, they inserted plaques. These plaques carried inscriptions or sayings, which were reminiscent of the class struggle, and redolent with the dream of the coming day of the working man. When brotherhood would be achieved at history's end by man and for man. Now for years, the old cairn was well-tended and much visited. But today, today, when you go there, it stands forgotten, crumbling, derelict, almost in total ruins. A ghostly monument to the futility of man's dream in the course of his own history. The futility of man's dream that it was only a matter of time before he could bring the kingdom of God upon earth. And countless more tragic monuments than that straddle the world in our day and generation. The futility of man's dream that he could do it himself. Is it not therefore one of the strange ironies of our age, that the accredited preachers and teachers of the churches here should always be talking about safeguarding the Christian truth against attack from without, against attack from communism, for example, while all the time we allow it to starve and die within. By preaching man instead of preaching Christ, by proclaiming the Church as an institution, instead of proclaiming God. The pulpit today in America, particularly, is still indulging in the old cult of reassurance about history. In many pulpits the Christian message is being ratified into a vague abstraction that has no gospel at all. It is too pale, and too human, and too puny to answer the plight of those who are yearning for a God who remains God, even when all the lights of history go out, And our dreamed off future is taken away from us. You know as well as I do that we really should face the fact honestly. And if you face the facts honestly, you cannot, I believe, take too much comfort from the current organizational success of the churches here, financially, numerically and institutionally. Much less can we be satisfied with the popular preaching of a God who is my minute enough to be contained within a few witticisms, and a few human interest stories. We cannot be satisfied with the preaching of a God who is the preserver of our way of life, the champion and the defendant of our national prosperity, the guardian of our poor human values. This preaching that we hear in many places, I am being frankly critical, is a perversion of the gospel of Jesus Christ, because it's a human message and not a divine one. As Reinhold Niebuhr has said again and again, "The gods of the 19th century, the gods of human progress, and history, and enlightenment, and the perfectability of man have suffered eclipse. They have died a thousand deaths, haven't they? In the carnage of the Pacific islands, in the North African deserts, in the battlefields of Europe, in the prison camps and gas chambers, in the nuclear fallout that drifts eerily across our skies, in the barbed wire at the Brandenburg gate of Berlin, the old gods are dead. If we would preach a relevant message to our time, we must preach a God who is bigger than all man's cultural pretensions. And on the other hand of God, who reveals himself in his agony in Christ to the agony of this wistful generation. Who reveals himself in his sacrificial failure and weakness to our sacrificial failure and weakness. For the old gods have failed us now. If we want to be relevant preachers, we would do well to harken to the message of that most searching and cathartic of all biblical documents, the book of Job, that poor old soul. A kind of Oriental beatnik of his own day. Out of his ash heap of suffering, he shakes his fist with promethian arrogance against heaven. There's something lovable about a rebel, and Job was one, an angry man. Anyhow, when his would be ministering friends try to comfort him with glib utterances about the little God of Orthodox Hebrew religiosity, he cannot endure their comfort, and violently rejects it. Job, you see, was living in that awful period, between the death of the old little gods of formal religion, and the

coming of that other God, who is higher than all men's calculations and hopes, and deeper than all human anguish. And the situation of man in the 20th century is precisely like that of Job, we too, are living between the times. The old gods of dead for us, and we await the coming of that other God, who is higher than man. Where is God, where is God? Where is God, mean are asking in this critical interim of ours. And you can see yourself how no little god created in the image of man can satisfy the hunger of our young people, particularly today. No version of religion which merely equates it with human hopes and desires is adequate to their need. No hyped up psychological pep-talking from the pulpit that merely chastises doubt and anxiety, and tries to spread the cult of individual, happiness and success, can assuage the fierce hunger of our generation for a real god, who is God. Where is God? In the face of this question which you are asking, you cannot escape it, you here this morning in this congregation of the Duke Chapel, in the deep places of your individual existence you are asking this question with a sharpness and agony. You've never asked it before in a day and age like ours, where is God? And in the face of this question the Christian pulpit could become truly irrelevant and come into its own in our time. I believe that the word we have to preach is that the living God is only to be found through the jaws of death, anguish and hell. Translated into Christian terms, that means simply the cross of Jesus Christ. Our Lord himself made it plain enough when he said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth would draw all men onto me." There is no way to a living God save through his own agony in the cross of Jesus Christ. There on Calvary, where all human hope is silenced, and all human dreams are annihilated, God speaks to this generation the word of light in death. The cost to God of speaking to us and rending the veil between himself and us is the sacrifice of his own Son. I know it isn't easy to formulate a philosophy of the cross of Christ. We can only speak stumblingly and falteringly before the mystery of it. But don't you think that the wistful ones of our generation could understand the passion and death of Jesus Christ far better than they can understand the fair weather, passionless preaching that is often given to them from our pulpits in this age. Luther sums the whole thing up about how any generation is to find God when he says, that God's word is always a word that slays. He must destroy what is in us before he can bestow upon us his gift. Let me try to put that in my own poor words. Before real faith lies the anguish of doubt. Before the song lies the sacrifice. Before the glory of resurrection life lies somehow a cross. Before God's help lies our own terrible helplessness. Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes. Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies. Heaven's morning breaks, and Earth's vain shadows flee. Help of the helpless who abide with me. I'm not suggesting that if you as an individual had an isolated personal encounter with the God who stands behind the cross that this would be a panaseer for all our terrible, collective and international problems. But what I do feel is this. That those who have found God in the darkness of the cross will not be broken or defeated by anything that this mad and ruinous world can do to them. For they will have laid hold of an unseen reality, that at one and the same time transcends our world and remains in the bides through all its anguish and distress. If you have plumbed the depths of the cross of Jesus Christ and the agony of God, which is present there, you will be able to go back into your society as a bearer of light when the shadows gather. And as one who is able to give courage to the falling and faint-hearted, when the world and worldly things are failing them. Father Tidel once said, "Often and often I have been tempted to give up, but always the sight of that strange man hanging on his cross has sent me back to my task again with new heart." The duty of the pulpit in such a wistful generation as this is abundantly clear. It is to call your attention to that strange man hanging on his cross. For only he can meet can meet your wistful longings. We have to preach Christ crucified. We have to lift up the lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world. This word of God that both slays and is slain. This alone has the power in

this wistful age to give us songs for our sighing, to turn our darkness into light, and to bring light out of death. Amen, let us. Almighty and ever blessed God, hold thou thy cross in Jesus Christ before our eyes. That we may know that where we have lost all hope in history and in man, we can trust in thee, and become light bearers of real hope to this troubled day and this distracted world. And to thee, be the glory. And now, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be upon you now henceforth, and forever more.

- I should like to speak to you about what it means to be a Christian. And I'd like you to regard what I have to say in a rather particular way, not as a definition to be memorized and repeated, not as a motto or a blueprint to be followed in mathematical detail, but as a threshold to be crossed. For as you know, the places we inhabit are pretty largely determined by the thresholds we crossed. The question about what it means to be a Christian is peculiarly relevant to a Protestant I would suppose. Protestants, as you know, are not those who protest against something. Protestare means to stand for. And when it comes to knowing what we stand for, we Christians in the Protestant form, while we may be all vogue on the outside, are often sometimes vague on the inside. What then does it mean to be a Christian? I would think in the first place a Christian is one who knows that God is his guardian. When the apostles stood in the presence of the rulers of Judaism, who tried to get them to stop their preaching in the streets, they said, "No. For we have gods to obey and not men." Judged by that criterion, there's only one thing worse than refusing the advice of others, and that's taking it. In ultimate matters, I mean, God has no proxy. He delivers his will. (audio skips) It was because the navigators failed to pay sufficient heed to their radar. Well, the Bible says society will be in a permanent state of collision if men adopt a radar type device for relating themselves to each other. Each man comporting himself in the light of the way, another man expects him to behave. For we have gods to obey and not men. And that understanding that God is our guardian cuts across every kind of radar tactic in social life, every kind of conformism, and opens our lives perpendicularly to God. To settle for life at any other level would seem to me to be to settle for life at the level of the conditioned reflex, which would turn life into a kind of ethical Pavlovism. You know who Pavlov is, Russian scientist who drew inferences for human behavior, from his experiments with animals, particularly dogs. Well, you feed a dog red meat and watch him salivate. Then you feed him red meat and ring a bell, and watch him salivate. Then one day just ring a bell, and the dog will salivate. One says his reflexes are conditioned. Henceforth, the hand that rocks the bell rules the dog. We have seen how an entire political system has brought to hold people under the domination to the system by the use of this method. We have seen it employed effectively in other areas of the world. But have we seen how prone we are as a society, and as individuals to adopt this Pavlovistic conditioned reflex basis for our own existence. But we have God to obey, and not men. I know I was at the University of Virginia once, scarcely a parallel to Duke University, but you'll pardon, it's just an illustration. And one of the main problems I confronted among Christian students on the campus there was what policy they should take toward the use of alcoholic beverages. And as we surveyed campus opinion, we discovered there were four points of view. One, boycott all parties where alcohol is used. Two, go to the parties, but don't drink. Three, go to the parties and drink. Four, go to the parties, drink and get drunk. Now among the Christian students we discovered there were two prevailing opinions, one might say live options. One was go to the parties, but don't drink. The other was go to the parties and drink. Hasten to add they weren't all Methodists. (congregation laughs) But the interesting thing about this investigation was that when we pried into the sources beneath the behavior of both these groups, we discovered they were identical. Their

different behavior was identically motivated. We asked the boys who went to the parties and didn't drink why they didn't drink? They said, "Well, our mothers and fathers taught us it was wrong to drink." We asked the boys who went and did drink, they said, "Our mothers and fathers taught us it was all right to drink." I submit to you both groups of boys had settled for life at the level of the conditioned reflex. But we have God to obey and not men. Well, you may ask me, "Michelson, is there more than one way of staying sober?" That's just the point, there is! You may stay sober because under God, you know your body is his living temple. Or you may stay sober because your mothers and fathers don't want you to drink; two completely different ways of life. You can extend this to other modes of behavior. You ask, "Is there more than one way of being chaste, sexually clean?" Of course, that's just the point. You may stay sexually clean because your mothers and fathers don't want you involved in a pregnancy before you graduate from college. Or you may stay sexually clean because you know you have no right to give yourself to someone to whom you have not been given, as in an act of marriage. Christians know that God is their guardian. Now I'm sure the chaplain hasn't brought me all the way from New Jersey just to come here and cut across adult authority in the life of this campus population. As a matter of fact, I have a fond respect for adult authority, being an adult. (congregation laughs) I even know of a freshman girl at Duke who was invited to go to her first fraternity house party. And she wrote to her mother asking permission. I will expect my daughter to do the same with her mother. And the mother wrote back in this case and said, "Which of the 18 fraternities?" And the girl wrote back specifying. And the mother wrote back again, you can waste a lot of postage this way. The mother wrote back again saying, "Well, what do they do with those house parties?" And the girl wrote back, very wisely I think, and said, "Well, they do just about what you used to do." (congregation laughs) She got a telegram saying, "No, you'd better not go." (congregation laughs loudly) I mean, adults have a rich store of experience that ought to be, rich store of experience that ought to be tapped. But in the last analysis, every adult should know that everybody else, including himself, has God to obey and not some other man. The point of what I'm saying is not to cut across any kind of authority, but try to estimate what the role of other people may be in our lives in the world in which we have gods to obey. I think a very interesting analogy was developed out in Oregon a few years ago in the medical school. Before this time in the medical school, the students have to take the professor's word for it as to the heartbeat of the patient when he performed the operation in the amphitheater in the classroom. But recently, in this particular medical school, they created a system whereby every chair in the classroom was wired for sound, so that these students had only to plug in their stethoscopes right at their seat, and hear the heartbeat of the patient for themselves. This didn't do away with the professor. The professor had to help them locate the heartbeat, but they had the privilege of hearing it for themselves. I submit to you, this is the structure of the universe. Others may help us locate the heartbeat of the universe, but we have the responsibility and the privilege of hearing it for ourselves. When my father was dying, I felt very remorseful that I had never really expressed myself about my appreciation for his handling of his family. So I said to him, just this one sentence, he was very weak it had to be brief. I want to tell you what I said, and then tell you why I think I said it. I said, "Dad, the thing that I have appreciated about you is that you never came between your children and God." Now this is what I think I meant. Every time I had a really crucial decision to make, I took it to my dad, but persistently, he refused to answer. He simply said, "Well, Carl, have you prayed about it?" Now, he was not a sticky, pious, sentimental fellow. He was a modern man. And yet he would say, "Have you prayed about it?" I think I knew then, as I know now, what prayer is. Prayer is a kind of cerebral x-ray that penetrates to our very thought processes. And when our thought processes are exposed to the eyes of God, we are fairly certain what we must do. Last

night, I flew into our nation's Capitol. I saw that great dome, all lighted up, my heart leapt within me. Possibly you think it's because I'm patriotic. Actually, this is where I took my wife on our honeymoon. And while we were there, we visited the old chamber of the House of Representatives, and you've probably been there yourself. The little old guy took our whole crowd, and put us around a spot in the floor. Then he went off to the other side of the room and he talked down at the floor, but we could hear his voice coming up in the midst of us. "Can you hear me? Can you hear me?" And we could, but at first we thought we were being tricked. This place was surely wired for sound. But no, as he explained, and it seemed quite plausible, this room was made to be acoustically perfect at one point, the point on which we had been placed. Now, is this not the character of the universe? It has been made acoustically perfect, at one point, the point on which we place our lives when we say, "What will thou have me to do?" For God is our guardian. I don't mean to say you'll hear voices. But they didn't complain that Joan of arc heard voices, they complained that she heard them in French instead of in Latin. I would complain if you heard voices. And I don't mean you would know for certain what you must do. The most important thing is not to know God's will, but to know that God's will is the most important thing. But that's the way a Christian negotiates his life. He puts his life on that acoustically perfect spot, and it takes on the aspect of a heavily leaved branch. One by one, these leaves become stripped away, selfishness, envy, pride, greed, defensiveness. Until at last his life is a branch bare, supple, to be bent to the purposes of God. This is what it means fundamentally to be a Christian, to know that God is your guardian. Now, one might add to this and say a second thing. A Christian is one who knows that the gospel is our guide. When Martin Luther stood in the presence of the Cardinals and bishops of the Medieval church who were trying to get him to recant some of his beliefs, he said, "No, my conscience is in captivity to the gospel, and a man cannot go against conscience." It is true that Christianity is fundamentally a religion of a book, the Bible, the gospel. Well that's makes us peculiarly vulnerable then. For what if our faith were based upon a book, and we Christians were illiterate? I'm told that there are some ministers who scarcely dare to allude to biblical stories these days, because the people don't recognize them, and then fail to get the point. I even ran across a man recently who believes that the epistles are the wives of the apostles. (congregation laughs) But then there would be only one thing worse than being illiterate if our religion were a religion of the book. And that would be two to read it in the wrong way. Like literalism, some people read the Bible as if it were printed in braille. They moved their fingers along every word, and treat every word as if it were as important as every other word. Of course, it's one of my friend's retorts, "How else can you read the Bible if you're blind?" But that aside, one must have a way of reading the Bible. One must learn to read the Bible intelligently the way he reads any other book. And how is that? I have a book on my shelves at home entitled, "How to Read a Book," by Mortimer Adler. It's just come out in a paperback. I have a brother-in-law the graduate school at the University of Wisconsin. He comes, he lies on my couch, and looks up at that shelf back and he's paralyzed. He says, "How can I read that book until I've read the book?" Well, there's something to that, it's like the Bible. (congregation laughs) How can you read the Bible, except from the Bible's point of view?!" That means you can't read it in any detail until you read it from the standpoint of the book itself, as you would be expected to read any other book. And when you do that, it emerges as the kind of book it is. For instance, it is not a book of science. If you want to know how the world began, do you go to Genesis? You do not, you go to the astrophysicists. If you want to know why the world began, then you may want to go to Genesis. If you want to know how the world will end do you go to the Bible? You do not. You go to the politicians. (congregation laughs) But if you want to know the meanings that will prevail at the end of time, then go to the book of the Revelation. There you will find that Jesus will

come riding on a cloud at the end of time. Well, this is not a meteorological judgment. Any semitic mentality knows that in the Bible cloud is a symbol for God's guidance. God led his people in the wilderness by a cloud. And at the end of time, God, whatever men do with the world, God will be leading his people. And the content of that leadership has been manifested in his son, Jesus of Nazareth. I don't mean to say there is no science in the Bible. I heard of an Israeli businessman who read the Old Testament about the story of smoke curling out of the ground, around Sodom and Gomorrah, and he immediately concluded there must be oil there. And he went and he bought up a plot of ground, and he dug and he struck oil, and he struck it rich. But the riches, the Bible talks about are not the riches we customarily associate with Iran and Texas. No, they are the riches of the knowledge, and love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. The Bible is not science. It's this fundamental kind of wisdom by which men can live. But then at the same time, if you read the Bible and let it emerge as the kind of book it is, you will discover, it isn't even Revelation. It is witness to the Revelation. The Bible is a very modest kind of book. It never points to itself. It is always pointing away from itself, but where? In the direction of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The Old Testament points forward, prophetically, the New Testament points backward episodically, and Jesus Christ emerges as the gospel in whom God reveals his word. That is to say, this is a book that is like a sign pointing. But you know some people don't know how to read signs. Say we get bored with things on the campus here this afternoon, and we decided to go to the great metropolis Raleigh. And we get in a car and we drive to the edge of the campus, and we see a sign pointing, Raleigh, and we stop. And we get out and sit around the sign. Well, it says Raleigh, doesn't it? (congregation laughs) That's the way some people treat the Bible. They sit by it as if it's a destination, whereas it's a sign pointing to a reality beyond it. I don't want to be too critical of that point of view, because surely it's preferable to the situation where one finds the sign and he pulls it up, and he carries it around on his shoulder. And the sign thereafter loses any capacity to give him direction. He reserves the right to dictate in which way the sign will point. But the point about a sign is to follow it where it leads, leave it there, follow it where it points. The person who has made this most clear to me is the 16th century Protestant reformer, Martin Bucer, who had a pedagogical device with his students. He would tell them this story about a prince who called together his counselors, his men of state, and gave them a message for the outlying provinces. And while the prince was giving the message, these ministers took notes to keep their memory fresh. Then he dismissed them. And the ministers went off to the provinces, and called the people together, and gave them the message of the prince, all the time, referring to their printed notes. Now, the pedagogical question that Bucer asked was this. Whom did the people esteem most highly? The ministers or their printed notes? The truth is they esteemed only the prince. Well, this is what it means to be a Christian, to know that the gospel is our guide to the guardianship of God. We can and probably ought to add one more dimension to this. A Christian is one who knows that grace is a gift. Do you realize that Cecil B. DeMille paid at the rate \$1 million per commandment, to produce the "The Ten Commandments?" But the question facing us is, how much do we pay when we break a commandment? And the Christian answer seems unequivocal. We pay nothing. Nothing in our hands we bring, simply to the cross we cling. Now, I'm not talking about a cheap grace. Just because we pay nothing doesn't mean someone does not pay. As the gospel song goes, Jesus paid it all. Therefore, I would not say what the Frenchman Voltaire has said. "Forgiveness is God's business. He will forgive." Forgiveness is not God's business. God's business is to control the universe. If he happens to choose a gracious way in which to do it, so much the better for us. And I would not say what George Bernard Shaw has said, "Forgiveness is a beggar's refuge. A man must pay his debts. Because you see, what of the debts no man can pay?" Say I come among you and you get some ugly

rumor about me, and you whisper it from lip to ear, lip to ear all across the campus until even freshmen avoid me on the paths. Then you find out how wrong you were, and you come to me and apologize, "Forgive me," you say. And I do, I must, 70 times seven, but can your being sorry, restore my injured reputation? I forgive you, but at this cost to myself. Why, I have my little boy on the streets of Durham, and some wild driver strikes him down, and he comes to me and he's sorry, he's penitent, he'll do anything. Well, I forgive him, but at this cost. God comes among us in the person of his Son, Jesus of Nazareth. We strike him down, while he says, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." That's grace. It is the gift of God's forgiveness. My father taught me this in a way. I used to borrow his car while I was in college for dates. I borrowed at one Sunday to take two girls to church, two girls, mind you not just one. And they weren't very nice girls, I think. That's probably why I was taking them to church. And on the way I smashed that car beyond repair, all my father's worldly goods were tied up in that car, these were depression years. And when my father came to the scene of the accident, he strolled right up to me, and put his arm across my shoulder, embraced me to him, and he said, "Carl, thank God, no one was hurt." In one act I had wiped him out. In one word he saved my life. God says, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." That word makes a new creation out of us. This is what it means to be a Christian. To know that grace is a gift, and that the gospel is our guide, and that God is our guardian. As Martin Luther once said, "We intend to die by this faith. Why should we not live by it?" Amen. Let us stand. Eternal God who has surrounded us with so great a cloud of witnesses, grant that thy eyes may penetrate to our very souls, that our vision may be made clear, and that our hearts may be mobilized in courage for the path that lies ahead. And now, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be upon you and abide with you always.