

(organ music)

- Good morning, and welcome to Duke Chapel on this warm summer day. Please stand and join with me for the greeting. On this day, we gather in oneness with our brothers and sisters to celebrate God's gifts.

(congregation chants) On this day we will share the bread and wine, which are symbols of God's power and love. (congregation chants) (organ music) (vocalizing)

- Brothers and sisters of the household of faith, the scriptures remind us in various places that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Therefore, let us make our common confession of sin. God, our mother and father, how often we have tried to escape your watchful eye. Whenever we measure ourselves by your intention for us, we are found wanting. We have resisted change and growth, we have seen your suffering people and passed them by. Your children cry out for mercy and compassion, and we harden our hearts and focus on more immediate concerns. We resent the intrusion of your Word into the cozy arrangements we have made for our own benefit. Save us from ourselves, we pray, Amen. Hear what comfortable words the scriptures say to all who truly turn to the Lord. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance that Christ, Jesus, came into the world to save sinners, Amen. Please be seated.

- Let us pray together the prayer for illumination. Open our hearts and minds, oh God, by the power of your Holy Spirit so that, as the Word is read and proclaimed, we might hear, with joy, what you say to us this day, Amen. The first reading is taken from the book of Second Kings, chapter two, starting with the first verse. Now, when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to Heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Then Elijah said to him, stay here for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan. But he said, as the Lord lives and as you, yourself, live, I will not leave you. So the two of them went on. 50 men of the company of prophets also went and stood at some distance from them as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up and struck the water. The water was parted to the one side and to the other until the two of them crossed on dry ground. When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, tell me what I may do for you before I am taken from you. Elisha said, please let me inherit a double share of your spirit. He responded, you have asked a hard thing. Yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted to you. If not, it will not. As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into Heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, Father! Father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen! But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. This is the Word of the Lord. (congregation chants) Thanks be to God.

- Today's Psalm is number 139, verses one through 12, found on page 854 in the hymnal. Please stand and sing responsively. (spiritual music) (vocalizing)

- Our gospel reading is from the book of Luke, chapter 10, beginning at the 25th verse. Listen for God's Word to us. Just then, a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. Teacher, he said, what must I do to inherit eternal life? He said to him, what is written in the law? What do you read there? He answered, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself. And he said to him, you have given the right answer. Do this, and you will live. But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, and who is my neighbor? Jesus replied, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now, by chance, a priest was going down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So, likewise, a Levite when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, while traveling, came near him. And when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him, bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he brought him, on his own animal, to an inn and took care of him. The next day, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper and said, take care of him. And when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend. Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers? He said, the one who showed him mercy. Jesus said to him, go and do likewise. This is the Word of the Lord.

(congregation chants) This passage from Luke is well-known and beloved. The Good Samaritan. It reminds us of people we know who have gone out of their way to help us or someone else. I remember well the passerby who stopped to help me when I had an auto accident. Perhaps, there was a neighbor, a friend, a stranger who helped you when you needed it most. Perhaps you've even had the opportunity to be a good Samaritan by coming to the aide of someone in need. We all know people we would call good Samaritans. It's such a familiar expression in our culture, you can even find it in the dictionary. A good Samaritan is defined as a person who acts with compassion and who is helpful to one in distress. Yes, this is a beautiful story of human compassion and kindness. We are moved by the good Samaritan who stopped to help a neighbor in need and appalled at the hard-hearted behavior of the Levite and the priest who passed by on the other side. How could they call themselves religious and act so coldly? It's a familiar, comforting story. We know who the good guys are and who the bad guys are. There is no ambiguity in this story. It's clear, and we all know the moral of The Good Samaritan. But this is not how the story would have been heard by Jesus' listeners. Let me set the scene for you. Jesus was nearing the end of his ministry. He'd healed many and proclaimed that the kingdom of God is at hand to anyone who would listen. He'd had numerous conflicts with the religious authorities. And though they felt he was potentially a dangerous influence, they were intrigued by his power. And they wanted to know more about his religious beliefs. A lawyer, an expert in Jewish law, stood up in the crowd and asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Now, this was a strange question, coming from one whose profession was to know the teachings of Jewish law inside and out. It was obvious that the purpose of this question was to test Jesus' knowledge of Jewish law. But Jesus threw the question back to him and asked, what is written in the law? What do you read there? The lawyer gave the orthodox, rabbinical answer. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself. Jesus responded, that's right. Do this, and you will live. End of conversation, right? Well, that wasn't what the lawyer had in mind. He continued, but who is my neighbor? Now this was a question much debated in rabbinical circles. Some defined neighbor as any person who kept the orthodox Jewish laws, others as any Jew. But there was no definitive answer, and the lawyer thought he could get the best of Jesus with such a difficult question. So what did Jesus reply? As he so often did, he told a story. It started out as a familiar story. A man was robbed

and beaten on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. This was a notoriously dangerous road. It was steep and rocky, about 17 miles long between the two cities. It was fairly well-traveled as there was much commerce between the cities, but there were many hiding places for bandits and revolutionaries. Travelers, especially those who traveled alone, were frequently attacked on the road. Now, by chance, a priest came along after the robbery and saw the man lying by the side of the road. And he looked half dead. The priest wanted to stop to help him, and he thought about it. But he was forbidden by Jewish law from having anything to do, from touching, from being anywhere near anything that was dead. If he did, he would be considered unclean, contaminated, banned from his religious community. To be restored to the religious community, he would have to go through a long, complex, expensive ritual cleansing. His religious duty was clear, and he passed by on the other side of the road. Now the second person that happened along the road was a Levite, a temple assistant. He too saw the man by the side of the road, but he had heard recently of a ploy that the robbers were using. They would put someone who looked injured to entice travelers. And when the travelers stopped to help the person, they would jump out from behind the rocks and attack them. He also was forbidden from having anything to do with an unclean, dead body. And rather than be disqualified from his duties or risk attack, he hurried to the other side of the road and went quickly on his way. The next person who happened along was a Samaritan merchant, a foreigner, a traveler in that land. To us, the good Samaritan that we know and love. But to Jesus' Jewish listeners, the lowest of the low. Their enemy and rival for the past eight centuries. Now they had once been kindred Jews, but the Samaritans had intermarried with other races. And they were now considered unpure and defiled. They had also adopted the practices of other cultures and religions, and they were considered religious heretics and social outcasts. The Jews believed that the Samaritans would do anything to get ahead, that they would prostrate themselves before any power. They had even been known to claim kinship with the Jews when it was in their favor and to deny ever knowing them when it wasn't. There'd been numerous wars between the Samaritans and the Jews, and the hatred and the enmity between them was great. Good Samaritan would have been anathema, a contradiction in terms to Jesus' Jewish listeners. But the reviled Samaritan saw the man by the side of the road, a man who was most likely a Jew, since he was traveling in Jewish lands, a man forbidden by Jewish law from having anything to do with him, a man who would have looked down on him in disgust if he could have lifted his head. He saw this man, his enemy, and was moved to pity. He went to him. He cleaned and he bandaged his wounds. He put him on his own animal and took him to an inn. He paid for his care. He even promised to cover any additional expenses that the innkeeper incurred, and he promised to return to check on him. Surprising behavior for an unclean, religiously heretical, socially outcast foreigner. Surprising behavior for an enemy. Jesus asked the lawyer, which of these three, the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers? Unable to even name the Samaritan, the lawyer said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus finally replied, "Go and do likewise," a repetition of his earlier reply. "Do this, and you will live." The lawyer had asked, "Who is my neighbor?" seeking to put limits on duty. But Jesus had changed the question to who is a neighbor? The lawyer knew well the essence of the law was to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself, but he had no intention of fulfilling the law. To Jesus, it was no light thing to know the command and refuse to obey it. But this would have been a shocking story to Jesus' Jewish listeners. It showed that a person they considered evil and unclean, an enemy, could act like a person who loved God. It showed that a person who met every requirement for religious responsibility and duty could act like a person who didn't love God. It showed that acts of love transcended acts of duty and that even one's enemies could be people

of God, that even one's enemies could be neighbors. This would have threatened their entire worldview as Jesus admonished them: Go. Act like your enemy, the Samaritan. Be a neighbor. Now, luckily, we don't have quite the difficulty understanding this text that Jesus' Jewish listeners would have. After all, the Samaritans are no enemies of ours. In fact, we are the Samaritans, the Gentiles, the racially and religiously impure. And the claims of this text are nothing new to us. It's a familiar story. We know we're meant to love our neighbors as ourselves, and we try to be kind to each other. We even give money to help those who are less fortunate than us. But who is our neighbor, really? Is it those who live on our block? Is it those we work with? Is it those in our church? Is it those in our community? We help those we think deserve it, but what about those other people? You know the ones, those lazy bums on welfare who won't lift a finger to help themselves, the people who are taking our jobs. Surely, we're not meant to help them. Or the people who are taking over our inner cities and neighborhoods with gangs and drugs, or those people who are dying, maybe, as they deserve to, from AIDs. What about them? Wouldn't we also like Jesus to put limits on the neighborhood? To define clearly who we have to be compassionate to? Who we have to act like neighbors toward? It's easy to be merciful to people we like, or people we respect, or people we think deserve it! But what about those other people? And what about the times when our duty conflicts with the needs of others? When our obligation to our own family and children is more pressing? We're sorry about those black children not getting a quality education, and we know that they deserve it. And we're all for that, but now that the school systems in Durham are to be merged, the quality of my children's education is going to suffer. And I don't know how we'll come up with the money, but we're pulling our kids out. We're going to private school. Or what about the times when our need to protect ourselves and our families seems to take precedence? We're appalled at the number of homeless people in Durham, and somebody ought to do something about that. But we just can't let them put a shelter for the homeless in our neighborhood. We can't have those kind of people hanging out around here. It wouldn't be safe. Please, Jesus, couldn't you give us some limits on who we're supposed to love? Like the priest and the Levite, we would rather cross over to the other side than risk contamination with the human need we encounter. Only we're a bit more sophisticated in our avoidance techniques. We keep ourselves pure by locking away the people we encounter with need in our various institutions. We put the addicts, the illiterate criminals in our jails. We put the elderly in our hospitals and in our nursing homes, and we put the poor in housing projects as long as they're not in my neighborhood. Out of sight, out of mind. How desperately we try to limit the neighborhood, but ours is a city and a country desperately in need of people who see one another and act toward one another as neighbors. For the past decade, the social problems and pressures have been steadily building until we saw their eruption in the recent riots in Los Angeles. Neighbor turned on neighbor, and the city burned as we crossed by on the other side. Durham and cities all across America waited with held breath to see, would it happen in our city? There's been a dramatic increase in the number of incidents of racially motivated hatred and violence across the United States. More than 1,600 Korean stores were ransacked or burned during the riots. A black, homeless man in Raleigh was severely beaten by three white teenage youths only within the past few weeks. Last fall, there was an anti-holocaust anti-Semitic ad placed by a well-known neo-Nazi hate group in Duke College newspaper. And the same ad is being placed in college newspapers all across the country. David Duke came within a hair's breadth of being elected governor of Louisiana on the basis of a slick hate campaign pitting middle class whites against welfare freeloaders, i.e. blacks. And the KKK in Wisconsin has vowed to build a high-tech studio to turn out a thousand politically savvy, blow-dry clones of David Duke to preserve what they consider to be God's chosen people, the white race. The races have defined one another

as enemies and crossed over to the other side, and the road has become a battlefield. Racial and ethnic intensities have multiplied worldwide, and you cannot turn on the news one single day without seeing some act of racial or ethnic violence across the world. Witness the recent tragedy in Yugoslavia. A little girl in Sarajevo who lost her mother to the violence and whose father is dead or missing has taught the other children in the orphanage to sing as loudly as they can when the bullets are flying and the bombs are exploding. They sing, our neighbors who were our friends are now our enemies. We try to kill our friends who are now our enemies. And when they die, we stand weeping over their bodies. Our world is greatly in need of people who will act toward one another as neighbors. It's easy to be neighbors with people like us. But what about the other people? What the world needs and what Jesus calls us to be are neighbors to those who are different from us, to those we might even define as our enemies. And that involves risk. For to act like a neighbor, we must bridge the gap between us and them. We must risk getting our hands dirty, becoming contaminated, becoming involved with them and their lives. One thing is certain. You cannot respond with compassion to another person's need and continue to treat that person like an enemy. When you act toward another in love, they become a neighbor. And your whole world shifts. It caused the Samaritan in the story to delay his journey, risk the danger of robbers, get down in the dirt to bandage his wounds, put him on his own animal, spend over two days' wages and commit to even more. You can be certain that this Jew and this Samaritan could never look at one another in the same way again. It's not easy to act like a neighbor to those in need, especially if they be enemies. If we take the logical, rational approach, we never will, because there are costs involved in being a neighbor. But if we allow ourselves to see and feel their pain, then we will be filled with compassion and moved to act with mercy as the people of God. Who among us will ever forget the image of Reginald Denny, beaten, stripped, half dead, lying in the road, helpless? And the man laughing and pointing, and the other man with his club raised, triumphant. How many passed by on the other side? But four men and women, four black men and women, saw his need, were moved to pity. They went to him, bandaged his wounds as best they could, put him in their own vehicle, risked the anger of the mob, and drove him to the hospital. Who was a neighbor to him? Go and do likewise.

- The Lord be with you.

(congregation chants) Let us pray. We praise you, King of Heaven, for your grace and favor toward us. And we love you that you tend and spare us, gently hearing and rescuing us from all our foes. But this day, we are burdened for our neighbors and our brothers and sisters around the world. You created us, oh God, for yourself and for each other. Lord, we do not understand why Christians kill Christians. We pray for our brothers and sisters in Eastern Europe, in Yugoslavia, what's left of it, in South Africa, in Peru. Lord, in your mercy.

(congregation chants) Oh Lord, you are our loving creator. You have provided for us a wonderfully beautiful and variegated world, and you have made us brown and white, yellow and red. Yet, we are offended by our differences. Our faith is often inadequate to reveal to us our common Lord who shares upon all an all-encompassing love. We are burdened by the intolerance and hatred and stereotyping and impatience we see in our neighbors, black, white, yellow, red. Help us to love one another as you love us. Lord, in your mercy.

(congregation chants) Oh God who has not only shown us mercy but taught us the true meaning of justice and neighborliness, we pray for the political process in our land. Too often, we appeal to what is base and

shameful in our common life. We teach not passionate reason and common search for the good and true but pettiness and quarrelsomeness and suspicion and hatred. We refine the art of innuendo. We encourage smallmindedness and meanspiritedness. We lose our way and abort the healing of deeply ingrained racial and class distinctions. By the mystery of your grace, oh Lord, lead us to greater tolerance. Love and care for one another. Take us out of our selfishness and greed into a willingness to sacrifice for the common good for our land and for the whole world. Lord, in your mercy.

(congregation chants) Lord, we acknowledge your gracious presence with us. Despite the troubles of our world and our troubles, we affirm and praise your redemptive and reconciling work in our world. You, who are king of kings and lord of lords, alpha and omega, in the name of our creator, our redeemer, our sustainer, Father, son, and Holy Spirit, we pray, Amen. Now, as a forgiven and reconciled people, let us rise and greet one another with signs of our reconciliation and love. Please be seated. Let us continue our worship with our gifts of tides and offerings. (organ music) (vocalizing)

- The Lord be with you!

(congregation chants) Lift up your hearts!

(congregation chants) Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God. (congregation chants) It is right and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere, to give thanks to you, God Almighty, creator of Heaven and Earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets who look for that day when justice shall roll down like waters and righteousness, like an everflowing stream, when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. And so, with your people on Earth and all the company of Heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn. (spiritual music) (vocalizing) Holy are you and blessed is your son, Jesus Christ, who came in your name as our king. Your spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. By the baptism of his suffering, death and resurrection, you gave birth to you. 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. At his ascension, you exalted him to sit and reign with you at your right hand. On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took the cup, gave it to his disciples and said, drink from this, all of you. This is the sign of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sin. Likewise, he took the bread, gave thanks to you, offered it to his disciples and said, eat from this, all of you. This is my body, which is given for you. And so in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith. (hymnal music) (vocalizing) 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 world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood. By your spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes 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 God, now and forever, Amen. (organ music) (vocalizing) Let us pray together as Jesus taught us. 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen. Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, are one body for we all partake of the one loaf. The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ. The cup over which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ. You are all invited to come to the Lord's table. (spiritual music) (vocalizing) Please stand with me for the benediction. Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your spirit to give ourselves for others, in love, as neighbors to one another. Now go forth into the world in peace as neighbors, and may the love of God and the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you and keep you. (hymnal music) (vocalizing)