

♪ His goodness ♪ ♪ Lost in His love ♪ ♪ This is my story ♪ ♪ This is my song ♪ ♪ Praising my Savior ♪ ♪ All the day long ♪ ♪ This is my story ♪ ♪ This is my song ♪ ♪ Praising my Savior ♪ ♪ All the day long ♪

- Good morning and welcome to this service of all saints here in Duke University Chapel. First thing, if everybody seated in the pews would sorta slide toward the center, that will help us to get a few more seats and that would be much appreciated by others. Great. Those of you still standing, if you would look to the sides. Great, thank you. Also, an announcement about an error in the bulletin, the last hymn is number 536. Not as printed in the bulletin. We're only two digits off and we consider that close enough. We want to welcome back to the chapel this morning my associate, Nancy Ferree-Clarke back to the chapel after a three-month leave of absence. Her daughter Elizabeth will be baptized in the chapel this evening and we're glad to have her back. And we're glad that you here, particularly, our alumni and our parents for this great day of walk of celebration in praise of all the saints. Let us continue to praise God. (gospel singing) (lively organ music) (congregation singing)

- The Lord be with you.

Congregants: And also with you.

- Let us pray. God of all holiness. You gave your Saints different gifts on Earth but one holy city in heaven. Give us grace to follow their good example. (congregation mumbles) Your servants Mary and Martha who loved their Lord, one through active service, the other through quiet adoration. (congregation mumbles) Apostle Paul who told what he had heard, spreading the good news into all the world, interpreting the gospel to all without distinction between race or nation. (congregation mumbles) King David who led your people with courage though he shared our human weakness, he was anointed with your spirit to lead with justice and integrity. (congregation mumbles) Judas Maccabeus, foe of tyranny and oppression, refusing to bow to the forces of evil, he inspired your people to throw off their chains and to claim their gracious birthright. (congregation mumbles) (lively organ music) (congregation singing)

- Please be seated. Let us bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly father, on this glorious Sunday morning when we commemorate the Feast of All Saints Day, let us think together of those who have preceded us in their journey to their just reward in the paradise which awaits all of your faithful. Grant to this university, all who attend here, all who serve here and all who have attended or served in the past, the opportunity to worship thee in the spirit of freedom, and justice and truth. And grant that we with all thy saints may join you in worshiping Father, Son and Holy spirit. Amen. The lesson is taken from the Revelation to St. John the Divine. Then I saw a new heaven and a new Earth. For the first heaven and the first Earth had passed away and the sea was no more and I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, behold the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself will be with them, he will

wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away and he who sat upon the throne said, behold, I make all things new. Also he said, write this for these words are trustworthy, and true. And he said to me, it is done, I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. This ends the reading of the lesson.

(tranquil meditative music) ♪ Oh when the saints ♪ ♪ Go marching in ♪ ♪ Oh when the saints go marching in ♪ ♪ Oh Lord ♪ ♪ I want ♪ ♪ To be ♪ ♪ In that number ♪ ♪ When the saints go marching in ♪ ♪ Oh when the saints ♪ ♪ Go marching in ♪ ♪ Oh when the saints go marching in ♪ ♪ Oh Lord, I want to be in that number ♪ ♪ When the saints go marching in ♪ ♪ Oh when the saints ♪ ♪ Go marching in ♪ ♪ Oh when the saints go marching ♪ ♪ They go marching in ♪ ♪ I want to be in that number ♪ ♪ When the saints go marching in ♪ ♪ Oh when the saints ♪ ♪ When the saints ♪ ♪ Go marching in, go marching in ♪ ♪ Oh when the saints go marching in ♪ ♪ Oh Lord, I want to be in that number ♪ ♪ Oh when the saints go marching in ♪ ♪ Oh Lord ♪ ♪ I want to be ♪ ♪ In that number ♪ ♪ When the saints ♪ ♪ Go ♪ ♪ Marching ♪ ♪ In ♪

- I got a call from Dean Sue Wasiolek, she said, look, we've already stirred up the parents enough when they heard from that Marxist philosophy professor on Friday, we don't need any other controversy this weekend. She was concerned about the title of the sermon. So, if you're a parent and you don't like the sermon, please don't call anyone about it. (congregation laughing) For the first time since I've been minister here, Parents Weekend falls on All Saints and that's a happy convergence. The presence of our parents is always a reminder that we are indebted to others, we're indebted to our parents for our lives, our looks, our values, our tuition. Parents remind us that nobody is self-made. Saints are also reminders of our indebtedness. We began the service today with thanksgiving for our saints among the thousands that stare down at us from their perches in the chapel windows, Samson and Sarah and Judas Maccabeus and David. Their presence here in this chapel reminds us that faith is a gift. You believe because somebody told you this story and somebody lived this story before you in such a way that made it worthy of your imitation, saints remind us that nobody is a self-made Christian. Those of you who know something about the Bible and its account of these saints, may be less than pleased to have me suggest that a Samson or a Sarah are your great grandparents in faith, oh sure, they may look saintly as they stare down at us from the chapel windows but in their day, few people probably called them saints. Maybe people seem more saintly after they've been dead 1,000 years but if you had to live with them, if you had to stare at them across a breakfast table rather than across a gothic chapel, if you had to be with them in everyday life, well, which reminds me of one thing that these biblical saints have in common, and that is they all had lousy family lives. I mentioned Samson and David. The mess that they made of their families is legendary and great grandmother Sarah, she not only managed to be the grandmother of a whole nation but she managed to pass on most of her psychoses to her children. If you knew their stories as the Bible tells them, you might question why they are our saints. Of course, we don't choose our saints. We don't choose saints, they are given to us through the tradition of the synagogue and the church. Ah leave them alone you say, it's bad taste to speak ill of your great grandparents in faith, and maybe that attitude is what differentiates us from the Bible. Today when we speak of family, parents, children, we're apt to speak sentimentally, unrealistically, if not downright deceitfully, ours is the happy family. Ozzie and Harriet, June Ward, Wally and the Beaver, George and Barbara, Kitty and Duke. (congregation laughing) But when the Bible tells about families about what it's like to be husbands and wives and parents and children, it speaks honestly. Samson, David, Sarah, Ruth, David, Bathsheba. And our dishonesty about our families is somewhat surprising considering the state of American

families today. Never has the divorce rate been higher, never had we had more problems with elder, spouse, child abuse. Ask any presidential candidate, he'll tell you American families are in a mess. You wonder what on Earth politicians talked about before they discovered American families are in a mess. Though apparently not their families. We've certainly seen enough of their happy families during the campaign. Now I doubt that either presidential candidate knows what to do about American families not because the candidates don't care but it's certainly not because they have undeniably the happiest families in America. But because when it comes to understanding what it's like to be a husband, a wife, a father, a mother, a child in a family, the candidates, as we ourselves, really don't know to think about the family. In the name of freedom, we Americans created something called the individual, the individual, nothing is more important to Americans of the political left or the political right than freedom of the individual, the sovereignty of the individual and preserving his or her options and freedoms and independence and as a result, relations between husbands and wives have degenerated into a contract between two individuals who jealously guard each one's rights and prerogatives, relations and families come to resemble relations in the rest of society, just a conglomeration of friendly strangers. We've created a world in which privacy is sought more than community, where no one is asked to suffer or sacrifice for anybody and where we desire both intimacy and still to be able to shake hands and say goodbye with no bad feelings. And I tell you that such thinking makes relationships between parents and children incomprehensible. I think the odd factor which makes being a child or a parent in this society so unusual is this. You didn't choose your parents and they didn't choose you. Now think about it. You don't choose relatives, they're just given to you. Even if you adopt a child, that child is going to grow to be so unlike that baby that you brought home from the adoption agency that you will continually know that this child is someone who has been given to you rather than someone who has been selected. As parents and children in a modern world which worships individual rights and freedom and choices and prerogatives, nothing is odder than learning to love somebody you didn't choose. To a surprising degree, this lack of choice extends even to the person whom we marry. Most people think that the toughest part about getting married is deciding whom you ought to marry, making the right choice, making the right choice in marriage and when asked what we're doing, we say that we're deciding whether or not we are in love which means are we emotionally attached? Curiously the church has traditionally cared less about our emotional attachments. What the church has cared about is not to whom you have deep feelings for because we know how notoriously fickle are feelings but rather are you capable of sustaining the kind of commitment required for love? In a marriage ceremony, there's no place the pastor stands up and says John, do you love Susan? The pastor rather asks John, will you love Susan and that's odd because you see, love is defined here as something that you just promise to do, love is a future activity, love is the result of marriage, not its cause and I know that sounds weird because we think the toughest part about say a relationship like marriage is choosing the right person, choosing the right person, but the funny thing is that for most of the church's history, marriage occurred among people who have hardly even known each other before the wedding. You're no doubt grateful that... Are they? Although they would be loath to admit it. One reason parents send their children to prestigious universities (congregation laughing) is so that they will meet prestigious people of the opposite sex. I mean we all know it's helpful to try to marry somebody who has similar interests and recreation and religion and background to your own and through piano lessons and summer camp and a BA degree, parents give their children the illusion that the choice of someone to marry is not really being arranged and I'm not being cynical here. In fact, cultures which practice arranged marriages, I hate to remind you, have a better track record on

marriage than we. I know a friend of mine who was a missionary in India was asking me who should be entrusted with such important matters as whom to marry? Someone who has never been married and has no life experience except school or someone who's been around 50 years and has actually been married? I didn't know what to say to him. I say rather than be embarrassed about these unchosen arranged aspects of our human relationships, maybe we should be upfront about how much of life we really didn't choose because it enables us to think clearly about the peculiar ethical demands that are placed upon us by being a parent, by being a child, by being husbands and wives. Peculiar because you're probably conditioned to think that some action really isn't ethical unless you have freedom of choice, unless you have exercised your own decision. Mama, I want to do it myself unless you decide for yourself that this is right for you. The trouble with that point of view is that marriage, just as being a parent, requires that we find some means of making sense out of being stuck with certain people for no good reason or justification other than we are with them and most of us learn to make the best of it. And I'm saying that right there is a picture of us at our very best. Right there is when we learn to be faithful, to love strangers even though we didn't choose them as someone we might have preferred to love. I know that sometimes I'll ask fellow pastors what do you do during premarital counseling and they will say things like I try to be certain that the couple knows what they're getting into when they get married. I don't know that pastors know what they're getting into when they get married. Those of you who are married or have been married, did you know what you were getting into? No. My friend Stanley Hauerwas has a wonderful essay in which he argues that we always marry the wrong person. Hauerwas means by that we never marry quite the person that we thought we were getting married to because marriage always changes people. It just does something to somebody to be married, to be promised to somebody to be faithful. And so, you wake up one day and you realize that the person next to you is really not the person that you married five years ago. But the truth is you're not the same person either and what do you do then? If marriage involves the correct choice of the exact person for the right reasons to whom you're emotionally attached, then you're in big trouble because the person has changed. And you've changed. Nobody I know ever chose to be married to a person addicted to alcohol. Nobody ever decided to be married to a person with terminal illness but sometimes those are the people you get. And I tell ya, I think your parents would want me to remind you that being a parent is a lot like that too. Parents never get quite the children they thought they were getting when they gave birth to a baby. That's why I've always been uneasy with the term planned parenthood. (congregation laughing) You get my point. Planned parenthood as if it's only good to have children if you have planned for them, as if you have chosen and decided for them. Who plans to have a severely retarded child? Who decides to have a rebellious child or a child who plays drums in a rock band? But sometimes that's a child that you get and then what do you do then? You can choose an automobile, you can maybe plan a career but you cannot choose a child. You've got to receive a child. The Bible is right. A child is a gift, not a possession, not a project, not an object, ambitious achievement-oriented people take note. Nobody knows what he or she is getting into as a husband, or a wife, as a parent or a child. And don't get me wrong, I'm all in favor of marriage preparation as far it goes and I think we ought to have more of it, I mean I'm in the marriage preparation business but the trick is to somehow prepare for a lifetime of commitment to a person who is a stranger, who keeps changing. How can you prepare for how annoying another person is going to be and so early in the morning too. (congregation laughing) How can you prepare for all the ways a child is going to challenge you, disappoint you, worst of all, come to look just like you only to desert you for college. You can't. You can't. And because you can't control, what you need is some means of being part of an adventure which you can't

control and you don't have to control. The end result you do not fully plan or understand. Morally we move into the future on the basis of such commitments. Commitments which are made without really knowing what you're getting into. There your parents sit thinking how much they have changed since they met you at the maternity ward 20 years ago. And I tell you, 20 years from now, you'll be surprised at all the ways that your parents have been the most important people in your life, even though you had absolutely nothing to do with their being your parents. Marriage, family are like that. What you need when you marry or have a child is some means of turning your fate into your destiny. And my claim this morning is that the Christian faith is such a means. The Christian faith can teach us to live together as parents, children, husbands and wives because just as you didn't choose a Samson or a Sarah to be your saints, to be your great grandparents in faith, you didn't choose Jesus to be your savior. Jesus came to us, Jesus came to us, not the other way around. John's gospel makes this explicit. One day Jesus turned to his disciples and said, folks, you didn't choose me, I chose you that you should go and bear fruit. Life cannot be mainly about freedom of choice and about our decision, since the Bible goes to great lengths to demonstrate that God must save us by what we cannot have by our own devices. The Bible and its stories of saints like Samson and Sarah is a long story of God's unrelenting, continuing determination to love us even when we are unloving and unlovable. It is also the story of God's continued determination to make us into a people who can be depended upon to love even strangers since we have learned in Christ what it's like to be a stranger and to be loved anyway. Remember that we were on the outside, we didn't deserve to be loved and he came to us and he loved us even when we didn't deserve it and so, we come to his table today with empty hands and hungry hearts, needing God to do for us what we cannot do to our own efforts and determination and striving and because he has chosen us and continues to feed us at his table, we are enabled to be free at last from our modern American obsessions with safety and control in order to risk being faithful even to people whom we can't control, even to those whom we didn't choose. To be faithful. Amen. (tranquil organ music)

♪ Amazing grace ♪ ♪ How sweet the sound ♪ ♪ That saved a wretch like me ♪ ♪ I once was lost ♪ ♪ But now I'm found ♪ ♪ Was blind but now I see ♪ ♪ Through many dangers, toils and snares ♪ ♪ I have already come ♪ ♪ T'was grace that brought me safe thus far ♪ ♪ And grace will lead me home ♪ (congregation singing)

Minister: The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Let us pray. Holy God, we pray for your human family everywhere. (congregation mumbles) Grant that all who are baptized into Christ may faithfully serve you. (congregation mumbles) Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake. (congregation mumbles) Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble. (congregation mumbles) Give to the departed eternal rest. (congregation mumbles) We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy. (congregation mumbles) Let us pray for our own needs and those of others. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

All: 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. (congregation mumbling)