

- Be of good kind. (light music) ♪ The lord is my shepherd ♪ ♪ No want shall I know ♪ (indistinct singing) ♪ He leadeth me where waters, waters flow ♪ ♪ My (indistinct) ♪ ♪ And wine, he is the way (indistinct) ♪ ♪ Oh lord, divine he is ♪ ♪ And oh, he (indistinct) ♪ ♪ I hear him shine on me ♪ ♪ Oh lord, I need thee ♪ (indistinct) ♪ Revelation fall over me ♪ The scripture lesson this morning is the 51:1-12. #Have mercy upon me oh God, according to thy steadfast love. According to thy abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done which is evil and by sight. So that though art justified in thy sentence and blameless in they judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in inequity and in sin did my mother conceived me. Behold, thou desires truth in the inward being, therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with thysel and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Fill me with joy and gladness. Let the bones which thou hast broken rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, oh god, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore me to the joy of their salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit. Here endeth the first lesson. (bright organ music) (organ drowning out singers)

- The Lord be with you.

- And with you.

- Let us pray. Let us offer unto God our prayers of thanksgiving. Almighty God, our heavenly father. We give thee thanks for unnumbered gifts. Thou has given us parents and teachers from whom to learn, thou was given us books and laboratories to enlighten our mind. We thank thee for our times of testing by which we can learn where we are strong and where we need to be strengthened. We thank thee for thy grace in our trials. We're grateful to thee for giving us light in darkness, strength in weakness, health to overcome illness, love to dispel loneliness, and hope to erase despair. For all these favors, we give thee hearty thanks through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us offer one special prayer of thanksgiving for service workers on the campus. We thank thee oh God for the faithfulness of those who care for us in this university, for those who cook and serve our food, for those who tidy rooms and halls. For those who scrub and paint and clean. For all who ease our life with endless daily chores, grant to them, joy in what they do, grant to us graciousness to show our thankfulness to them through him who came not to be served, but to serve, even Jesus Christ, our Lord. And let us offer one prayer of intercession, particularly this morning for the whole hospital complex. We commend unto thee oh father all who hallow suffering. Those who in their thoughts for others leave no room for pity of themselves. Those whose patience inspires others to hold on. We commend unto thee all who endure suffering. Those whose bodies, our minds are distressed. Those who cannot be themselves because of pain. Grant to all who are bound. one to another in the fellowship of suffering, the sense of comradeship, the knowledge of thy presence, and give them thy peace, which passes understanding. Now, let us offer prayers of supplication, first for the athletic aspects of our life. Oh God who has made a world

where struggle brings strength and indolence leads to weakness, grant us the best rewards in all our contests of strength and skill in the realm of athletics. Deliver us from vain glory and eager wisdom, from spite and the harboring of any grudge. Make us thoughtful winners and gracious losers. Keep our rivalries from becoming obsessions. Make us grateful for the discipline of playing with and against others, but earn control of muscle, mind, and eye. And for the fraternity of coaches and players and supporters. And let us offer the prayer of supplication for the military aspects of our life. Almighty and eternal God who has set our lives in a time of war, enable us to convert to a good purpose, whatever military demands are laid upon us. If we undergo training, may it strengthen our discipline and lift our ideals of service. If we face comeback, may it not wrench away our Christian sympathy, nor harden our heart. If we refuse the military way, may our decision be made with insight and humility so that whatever our response to the violence of men and nations, we may continually fight the good fight of faith in him whose kingdom is not of this world. Even Jesus Christ, our Lord. And let us offer a short application for ourselves. Oh God, may there be nothing done this day of which we shall be ashamed when the sun has set. Nor in the eventide of our life, when our task is done and we come home to see the face to face. And now, as our savior Christ has taught us, we humbly pray together saying our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us, not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

- Shakespeare has King Richard to say, "My conscience half a thousand several tongues, "and every tongue brings in a several tale and every tale "condemns me for a villain." King Richard's problem was that he had a guilty conscience. Now in this, he was not alone, certainly. Every person old enough to listen to a sermon has that problem. This is true of the religious person. It's also true of the irreligious person. If in the home of an atheist the radio was inadvertently left on while the Duke Chapel Service came on the air just a little while ago, the atheist may now be thinking that he doesn't have the problem of a guilty conscience the way those religious people have. If he thinks that he doesn't know what is going on in his own subconscious mind, for whether we conceive of it as being an outraged conscience formed and informed by the revelations of supernatural religion or whether we conceive of it as being a violated and painful superego inlaid with the mores of society, we all have to deal with the sense of guilt. We may repress it by denial and force it to fester underneath the surface, or we may openly face it and constructively deal with it. This sermon is one attempt to do the latter. You know, this might be thought of as being a particularly good time to examine our guilty conscience because Ash Wednesday is only 10 days away. Ash Wednesday inaugurates the season of Lent, a 40 day period during which we Christians have traditionally inspected our consciences and have sought to make amendment at the points where we are guilty. Actually, however, anytime is a good time to come to terms with a sense of guilt. For as much as we may sympathize with Ogden Nash in his impulsive wish to have either a clear conscience or none at all, our realistic choice is not quite that simple. We cannot merely by wishing have no conscience at all. Whether our religious commitment or lack of it is Christian or whatever. Now, in the case of the religious person, his or her conscience is formed largely by the teachings of the religious body to which he or she gives allegiance. In the case of the non-religious person, his or her conscience is foreign by the standards and mores of the groups in which he or she finds meaning. Now in this latter view, (indistinct) mom defined the conscience simply as the guardian in the individual of the rules which the community has evolved for its own preservation. Dr. Dayton Vandusen says

that a man's guilt feeling is immediately connected with his own sense of values from what he expects of himself. And it is an empirical fact that all of us discover pretty early in life that we have outreached our own accepted code enough times, and with sufficient seriousness, that we feel guilty by our own standards. Now, this is often a rather big problem to us. So much so that we come at last to agree with Huckleberry Finn that our conscience takes up more room than all the rest of a person's insides. Let's be very blunt about it. No one of us enjoys feeling guilty. It's quite uncomfortable. Now, it makes us uneasy enough when another person declares we are guilty. But when we ourselves bring in that verdict, the pain is very excruciating. Our minds go to work at once to solve the problem, one way or another, hoping to get relief from the lash of a nagging conscience and to restore our better self image to a state of self-respect. But watch out, watch out. How we enterprise the doing of this is of the greatest importance. As understandable as it is to desire freedom from the awareness of guilt, the route that we take toward that freedom may lead to a heartbreaking tragedy or to great bliss, depending. Some of the escapes we attempt are not only unsuccessful, but terribly destructive, so that our sense of guilt itself becomes a problem to us. It may even lead to the compounding of our guilt. Accordingly, we often observe a person struggling to free himself from guilt, only to find himself the more ensnared, like a fly struggling to free itself from flypaper. Now there is a Christian solution to the problem of the guilty conscience. And I wish at this point merely to mention it and then contrast it with some of the non-Christian attempts at the solution of this problem. Christian faith, as was hinted at in the reading from Psalms earlier in this service, declares that anyone who wishes to be free from his guilt should whole heartedly acknowledge his sin. Be truly sorry about it. Ask in faith for the forgiveness of God and of any human he has wronged, turn his back on sin and make such an amendment of past wrongs as are within his power. All who will do these things have been fully assured of complete pardon by God, and are entitled to be entirely free from all feelings of past guilt. A sense of guilt which leads to this kind of action is wholesome and good for it is unlikely that we would even seek forgiveness for our sins without a painful prick from our consciences. But a sense of guilt, which does not lead to such action as that can be extremely destructive. This is the case because even if a person is unwilling to admit his guilt and to seek forgiveness, he nevertheless cries out to be free from the awareness of his guilt, from the guilty feeling and his subconscious mind continues to work in an effort to achieve that freedom and the things which a guilty conscience will do to us and in turn make us do to ourselves and to others are truly frightening. A man going through life with a guilty conscience is like a mack truck without a driver, rolling downhill on a street crowded with pedestrians. There is no way in advance to calculate the damage which will be done, but it is certain that the agony will be extensive. One thing a guilty conscience does is to cause us to resent other people, to perceive them in distorted fashion and therefore to misrepresent them. You see, if I have done you an injury, and I really know that I have, if I am unwilling to acknowledge it, make amends and ask your forgiveness, the very thought of you is going to make me uncomfortable. I begin to resent you. And finally, I come to hate you. You probably have heard the old saying that one of the surest ways to make a man hate you is to loan him \$10. Now the thought behind that old adage is that the man who does not soon repay the money finds that the sight of you reminds him of the debt he owes. And he resents the fact that he's obligated to you and finally comes to resent you personally. Unfortunately, the process does not stop there. The next step is that he begins to tell himself that he really does not owe you that \$10 because you once did something bad to him, or you're a cruel person who does not deserve to be repaid the \$10. During my ministry I have counseled a number of women who have been having illicit affairs with men who were married to other women. Each one of these paramours said that the man told her his

wife did not try to understand him or his wife was mean to him or had broken a promise, which was important. Whatever may have been the truth about those reports, the likelihood is that these men did not notice how great these supposed defects were in their wives until they began the illicit affairs and their consciences began to torment them about their broken marriage vows. Then they tried to ease their bruised consciences by a distorted perception of their wives. And the result was to heap character misrepresentation on top of unfaithfulness so that their guilt was heavily compounded. Second, a guilty conscience can make us poor judges of what is wise and right. Dr. Hubert C Noble, executive director of the division of Educational Institutions of the National Council of Churches has recently pointed out how destructive a sense of guilt can be in the whole area of race relations. He said that some white churchmen who in the past have done very little to bring about racial justice now find that they have a huge unrelieved sense of guilt regarding their black brothers, as indeed they should have. They therefore he says will support any idea or scheme proposed to them by any black man, whether it is wise or foolish, constructive or destructive. They therefore run the risk of adding to their past guilt caused by inaction. The present guilt of supporting unworkable and utterly stupid schemes, merely to be able to tell themselves that they're helping some black man or some black group get what they say they want. Many parents fall into this variety of trap because of their guilt feelings toward their children. Fathers who come home from the office and take out the day's frustrations on their children, socialite mothers who spend almost no time with their children, drinking parents, whose children regularly discovered them drunk, divorced parents who fight a tug of war over their children, all these and many others find themselves with an unrelieved burden of guilt with regard to their children. Now, and all too typical and destructive tendency therefor is for the parent to grant any request which comes from the child, even though the granting of the request might be the most harmful thing the parent could do for the child. But the load of guilt which the parent has so impairs his judgment that he cannot understand what is wise or unwise. Third, a guilty conscience unrelieved can cause us to make the innocent suffer because of our sins. The concept of a scapegoat is very old. Human beings have busied themselves in this way for a great many centuries. In the days of the priest, Aaron, the children of Israel followed the practice of ceremonially placing their own guilt upon the head of a live goat, and then seeing to it that the goat escaped into the wilderness, thinking that the sins and guilt would go with the goat and the goat would be devoured by the wild beast. At some risk, I pointed out that we see how this works in basketball. Get ready. The referee has a very hard job at best, trying to call the plays fairly, but in the hustle of the game, he makes a call, which almost as soon as he has made, he realizes was unfair to player A on the blue team and all the supporters of the blue teams see that the call was unfair and they are mighty vocal about it. Now the referee isn't going to change his call, but he feels guilty about his erroneous call against the blue team. Now, what does he do? Very soon he calls a foul against player B on the white team. This satisfies the outraged blue fans and eases the referee's conscience. Ah, but instead of easing his conscience, it should make him feel doubly guilty in that he made a scapegoat of a player on the white team who had committed no foul and who did nothing to deserve having a foul charged against him. And yet this kind of thing happens. It's the shame of the game. Wellforth, a guilty conscience can make us sick. Physicians who practice in psychosomatic medicine bear testimony to the power of guilt to make the flesh sick. Psychiatrists tell us how unrelieved guilt can make us emotionally ill. Dr. Carol Wise has explained it in this way. Because feelings of guilt are so painful, and because they're often too strong for an individual to face and handle openly by himself, they're pushed back to deeper levels of the mind. Technically this is called repression. Repression is a protective process of the mind which makes one unaware of feelings that are

painful. Dr. Wise says, one may not be aware of guilt feelings, but unconsciously may feel very guilty. If this is the case, the feelings of guilt will find some disguised form of expression, such as a symptom of physical illness or a compulsive need to wash his hands or engage in some other unexplained activity. Or he may have the idea that other people are always watching. These symptoms, he says, serve as a defense against allowing the feeling of guilt to become conscious again. This is where the illness comes in. The person finds himself forced by feelings of which he is not aware to act or think in certain ways that produce unhappiness and destroy his capacity for effective living. He is sick because he does not consciously know what makes him do what he consciously does not want to do, and because he cannot control his behavior. Part of him is controlling all of him. There is a fifth kind of damage that comes from a tortured conscience. It causes us to fail. It makes us defeat ourselves. Subconsciously we feel that we deserve to be defeated. Detectives say that many criminals are caught by clues which they left themselves. Some of these clues seem almost to have been planted as though the criminal were saying, please catch me. I deserve to be punished. Some people who appeared to be accident prone have been known to have fewer accidents after their guilt was relieved. Well, a guilty conscience often causes us to major in minors, to make mountains out of molehills, magnify small issues into great ones. A Casper Milquetoast whose conscience troubles him because he's wrong on a great issue will sometimes become a zealot about a petty issue to salvage his conscience. Jesus noted how this was true of the Pharisees in his day, they had a guilty conscience about big issues so they compensated by being zealous over small ones. They strained at gnats after having already swallowed camels. A seventh possible difficulty resulting from a tortured conscience is what psychologists call projection. We try to ease the pain of knowing that we are bad by reporting that the whole world is bad. Dr. Fostick said, "The bully thinks the world is full of bullies. "The homosexual perceives homosexuality everywhere. "The bad tempered man is always discovering "bad temper in others. "The liar says all men are liars." Believe it, beloved, there are other harmful effects of an unrelieved guilty conscience, which could be described if time permitted. But today these seven are enough to suggest that the damage which can be done is indeed formidable. The pained conscience, which can be good, and which is a necessary step toward repentance, confession, and forgiveness, can also be destructive if we stop short of such a remedy as that. The good news of the gospel is that there is forgiveness for every repentant sinner. That no one needs to suffer under the weight of a burden of guilt. This is true because of the love revealed in Jesus Christ and the forgiveness and grace which he offers. It's even true of the person whose emotions and whose mental processes have been twisted by guilt long sustained and often compounded. In the year 1878, William C Gladstone said, "The disease of an evil conscience "is beyond the practice of all the physicians of all "the countries in the world." Now I will not argue whether that statement was true or untrue at the time he made it. But I am to be able to say it certainly is not true in 1970. There are many physicians whose successful practice includes the disease of an evil conscience. Dr. Albert Adler in his book "Psychotherapy and the Christian Message" has said these words, which pack a great deal of wisdom and Christian insight into them. "The Christian experience of forgiveness "is not an earned acquittal, "nor an indulgent dismissal of the guilty. "Man, repentant, phases the transforming reordering impact "of God's grace on his disorder. "The moral law is neither relaxed nor violated. "Man comes to know that God's love has made cost to himself "in reconciling his estranged "but beloved children to himself." "The distinction between sin and the sinner "is firmly maintained." Thus, the Christian man forgiven can cast away the guilt and shame of his sins without any self-indulgent sense of complacency. So the most effective cure of all is the therapy of regular worship, in which the sinner confesses before God and man that he is guilty. That he's sorry for his sin, that

he asks the heavenly father through Christ to pardon his sin and dissipate his guilt. And he asks for grace to repair the damage that has been done, to rise above sin in the future. And then even as Dean Cleland led us in our worship today, he hears the comforting words of scripture assuring him that if his repentance was genuine, his pardon is indeed secured, not on the word of man, but on the word of God. He then goes out into the world a free man, ready for a new and clean beginning. With joy he witnesses to the love of Christ and he is liberated from all the hangups of guilt and the sicknesses of guilt and the bad perceptions of guilt and the resentments. His perceptions are clear. His relationships are genuine and loving, and he is a real asset to the world. To the glory of Christ and in his name. Amen. (bright organ music) (organ drowning out singers) (solemn organ music) (singer singing in foreign language) ♪ All that I do, where might I find him ♪ ♪ That I might see your loving, warm (indistinct) ♪ ♪ Oh, that I might know, where I might find him ♪ ♪ That I might (indistinct) for his grace ♪ ♪ Oh, (indistinct) ♪ ♪ Oh, that I knew, where might I go to him ♪ (indistinct) ♪ Where he might find me ♪ (indistinct) ♪ He shall everlast, 'til he find me ♪ (singer singing in foreign language) (vigorous organ music drowning out singers)

- Oh God in whom we live and move and have our being, here we offer and present unto thee our silver and our gold, the symbol of ourselves, to be out a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice unto thee through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And unto God's gracious mercy and compassion, do we commit you? May the blessing of God come upon you abundantly. May it keep you strong and tranquil in the truth of his promises through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (bells ringing) (dramatic organ music) (silence) (people speaking faintly)