

(choir singing) (piano playing) (piano playing)
(choir singing)

- Grace be to you and peace from God, our father and from the Lord, Jesus Christ. May we continue our worship, as we pray together, the unison prayer of confession, remembering these words from holy scripture. If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land? Let us pray together. (all) Have mercy upon us, oh God According to thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out our transgressions. Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity and cleanse us from our sin For we acknowledge our transgressions and our sin is ever before us create in us clean hearts oh God and renew a right spirit within us, cast us not away from thy presence and take not thy holy spirit from us Restore unto us the joy of thy salvation and uphold us with thy free spirit Amen. And here are these words of our Lord. Jesus said to the repentant sinner, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven Go, and sin no more. And I say unto you, knowing that we are received by God, let us choose his acceptance. Accept the fact that you are accepted by God's amazing grace to live freely in Christ For freedom Christ has set us free, stand fast therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. For you were called to freedom brothers only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servant One of another for the whole law is fulfilled in one word, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. If we live by the spirit, let us also walk by the spirit. Amen. (piano playing) (choir singing) (coughing) (soft piano music) (choir singing)

- The lesson today is from the book of Ruth, selected verses from chapters one and four. "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled that there was a famine in the land and a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife, Naomi, and the name of his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. And they came into the country of Moab and continued there. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died and she was left and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab, the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelled there about 10 years. And Marlin and Chilion died also both of them and the women was left, were left with their two sons and the husband. And she arose with her daughters in law that she might return from the country of Moab. For she had heard in the country of Moab, how the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was and her two daughters in law with her And they went on the way to return into the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house, the Lord deal kindly with you As he had dealt with the dead and with me." And they lifted up their voice and wept and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her, and she said, "Behold, thy sister-in-law has gone back onto her people and unto her gods." Return thou after thy sister-in-law" And Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave thee or to return them following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go And whither thou lodgest, I will lodge thy people shall be my people and thy, God my God where though diest will I die? And there will I be buried, the Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee from me" And Naomi

had a kinsman of her husband's A mighty man of wealth and then up the family of Elimelech and his name was Boaz. And Boaz took Ruth and she was his wife. And when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception and she bear's son. And the women said unto Naomi, "blessed be the Lord, which has not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life and a nourisher of thine old age, for thy daughter-in-law which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons hath born him." And Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom and became nurse unto it. And the women, her neighbors gave it a name saying, "there is a son born to Naomi and they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David" Here ended the lesson, Amen. (piano playing) (choir playing)

- The Lord be with you,

- (all) and with your spirit.

- Let us pray. Let us offer unto God, our prayers for others and for ourselves. All mighty God, thou of a hundred names, but ever the same in mercy and in love. Thou we stand us beyond both the darkness and the light who are hidden by the names we give thee and who move us in mystery to touch us to life. Grant us we ask in this hour, the glory and the power of thy presence. Breakthrough oh Lord the safe customs of our praise. Turn back the thin devices of our devious fear. And let us hear thy word reverberate in the high places of our heart and in the deep abyss of our knee our father if religion has protected us from thy mercy or our prayers smothered our rebellion and sin, or our faith may digress feudal, then put us straight We ask, and deceive us and bring us to where we will find that thou are truly our savior and our Lord. Who God whose son has taught us that we are members of one body. We take our place in the human family by offering our intercessions for our brothers and our sisters need. Each of us brings before thee, in holy remembrance our heavenly father, loved ones and friends, our brother whose face and name we know, and our brother, and we know not. Some are in far lands, some are in the midst of war, some in barren places in during loneliness, hardship and peril, some face pain and death this day, some confronted by perplexities are wearied by monotonous duties. All these are brothers, bearing the burdens of this world's struggle and striving everywhere to live and to be found worthy of their fellow men. For all who experienced suffering, injustice, bitterness, humiliation, grief and despair we under see Oh Lord. May thy love penetrate their condition and quench their hunger and bring peace. Oh creator and Redeemer, We have labored each of us in our own place seeking to share in the work of the world. We have known the anguish of incompetence and we have tasted the bitterness of failure. Father we have dreamed dreams and we have seen visions our brains and our hands have long to lift our labor to such creative skill that all we did we'd sing with joy Lord by something, beyond our failure, something beyond our small successes, we struggle onward that we may be counted worthy of the kingdom, where all things are done in the light and with Endless joy. Oh God, grant us patience to endure our failures and humility to outgrow our achievements that we may increasingly serve thee our creator and the needs of our fellow men. Oh God of justice thou has called us to a life of wholeness and integrity. Give to us We asked not only of what wholeness will mean in our time, but the courage and the power to bring it into being in our personal relationships and in our social structures. Help us oh God to see the blatant folly of the popular myth that we can have cake while most men starved. Help us to see the terrible price we must be prepared to pay If we persist in seeing the world as our empire. Help

us our father to move quickly to those necessary and difficult reordering of priorities that can spell reconciliation and resurrection for our people. May our arrogant concern for dividends and for profits for better overkill, better missiles, be replaced by a people committed to its initial mission of building a free and just and human society here in this new land In educating of people dedicated to freeing mankind from its age old curses of war and racism and exploitation of man by man. Enable us, oh God, to operate as agents of reconciliation and resurrection at the point of our calling, as students, as teachers, as workers, as parents, as citizens Help us to ingest care and service and compassion into the crises that are an inevitable ingredient of the times that thou has given unto us Remind us, oh, righteous God, that fearless prophet of Galilee Whom we call our Lord, that our prophecy too, that is central prerogative of the Christian and that ingredient of all true education will be like his and will not warn of Armageddon, but we'll invite to mercy and to justice and to community. We asked these on all things in the name of him who taught us to pray together saying, (all) "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.

- The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all Few weeks ago, One of the best known men on campus, one of the most important de facto, if not the jure, asked me if I would repeat a sermon which I preached in 1947 about two years after he and I had come to work at duke I willingly agreed provided that I could name the sermon after him. He thought over the suggestion for 24 hours, then he consented. From now on it is his sermon for better or for worse. Do I have to tell you a deal congregation who big bill is? He is Mr. William Jones of the dining halls, special functions manager, (indistinct) hotel, Mr. Miners right hand honorary member of ODK named faculty advisor to a white fraternity, personal counselor to faculty children in trouble admired, respected trusted, loved. Someday on honorary degree committee, will have the rare gumption to make this son of North Carolina a son of duke or (indistinct) Here then is big bill sermon, somewhat changed since 1947. The old Testament book of Ruth part of which was read as our scripture lesson closes with these words, "Now these are the descendants of Perez, Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron of Ram Ram of Amminadab, Amminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon of salmon, salmon of Boaz, Boaz of Obed Obed of Jesse and Jesse of David. Now from a literally point of view, that is as unlovely a way, of ending the book of Ruth, as one could imagine. It may be according to nature for a love story to end in a Genealogy but it is hardly in accord with art Artistically the conclusion of Ruth is a clumsy outreach. As we all know, this little biblical book of four chapters is the next (indistinct) story of country life in the village of Judah, telling of the coming of Ruth, the Moabite as widow to Bethlehem with Naomi her mother-in-law and how gleaning in the field she met and later married Boaz a gracious generous landowner. It's up Bonnie book, a thing of beauty and a joy forever and it ends now these are the descendants of Perez, Perez was the father of Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, David. These verses of the quintessence of anticlimax and the most important verses in the entire book. Why? Because what the author wanted to say is summed up in that Genealogy. Now, why is that important? A family tree twice repeated, the second time elaborated for emphasis, well let's look at the question together. The book of Ruth was written as a protest against our religious and social point of view held by good men. Now note that was not a protest against the point of view held by bad men, that would be understandable in the Bible Was a protest against a social and religious point of view held by good men. What was upsetting the author of the book of Ruth? I also

understand that we must understand something of the history of the time when the book was written. After the Jews returned from the exile in five 38, they discovered by bitter experience that they could not become an independent national state again, that enemies would not allow it. Therefore they resolved to establish themselves as a church state and ecclesiastical state with the emphasis upon religious holiness, rather than upon political independence. Now there was one ingredient in their conception of holiness, which became for them the dominant emphasis, separateness. Perhaps Ezekiel the priest prophet of the exile is responsible for this because in the last eight chapters of his book, he sketched the plan for the restore Jerusalem temple. It was to be isolated on a hill. It was to be set in a strip of territory surrounded by a wall. It was to be divided into courts each more sacred than the previous one with the holy of Holies in the center exclusive. Holiness is separate that which is holy is that which is separate. Now in the century following Nehemiah perhaps the most distinguished layman in the old Testament picked up his idea of separateness and stressed it in the realm of social relations and passed legislation to be effective. For example, the Ammonite and the Moabite may not come into the congregation of the Lord for ever and ever. Therefore, he decreed the separation of Israel from foreigners on the divorce of all farm life. 50 years later, as for repeated this decree the ratio stock must be kept pure. That is holy, holiness is separateness. Now there was at least one man who disagreed with this legislation. He didn't believe in it, he decided to make his protests known. How? He wrote down a story, an old story, a winsome story that people had loved and would continue to love the story of Ruth. But he put a sting in the tail, which is where a sting ought to be. He attached a genealogy to show that David, the greatest and most beloved king, the one who was to be the ancestor of the Messiah according to popular opinion, he had foreign blood in his veins, Moabite blood. Think of that Moabite blood, one of the two nations, which Nehemiah had picked out to attack and what a sensation that must occur. David's great grandmother was a foreigner. Imagine the excitement in Germany, if the record of vital statistics had shown that Hitler's great grandmother had been a Jewish or think of the perturbation near her home, if it were discovered that the head of the KU Klux Klan had a Roman Catholic or a Negro great-grandmother and consternation, if she were both Roman Catholic and Negro. Glory Be can't you hear people talking? What about it Nehemiah and Ezra? If you're brain trust had been working in the days of the judges, we might never had the king David we did get, with Ruth, the Moabites in his blood. You see what the author of Ruth did, He refused to accept the official point of view of his peers, just because it had ecclesiastical sanction. He would not be bound by the tribal ethic of his day, just because it had the backing of good men. He would not swallow the conservatism of officialdom, Why? Oh, because the blood of the insurgent prophet ran in his vein. He had imbibed from them another point of view that the vision of God is a wide embracing point of view. Maybe he remembered Amos. "Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt?" Yes. And the Philistines from copter What? And the Syrians from pier, oh, this is too much. And good men led by the high priest of Bethel asked Amos either to be quiet or get out. And the he got out and wrote a book, the earliest complete book in the old Testament. Perhaps the author of Ruth remembered second Isaiah the unknown prophet of the exile. He looked upon the Persian conqueror Cyrus as the Messiah. Now that to a conservative Jew was the heresy of Harris's That the Messiah should be a foreigner though second Isaiah said to him was, "Don't try dictating to God, he knows what he's doing." So (indistinct) author wrote his book to show that God is more inclusive than our local ideas or provincial loyalties and that good men are not always aware of it. And the protest of Ruth was reinforced by Jesus. He embarrassed the Jews by placing the conduct of a despised Samaritan above that of the temple clergy and the highest tribute ever paid anyone was paid to an, a Roman officer in an form army occupation. I haven't found faith like that in

Israel. Paul picked up the idea in Christ Jesus, there's neither Jew nor Greek, neither bonded or free neither male or female. What does that mean for us When we come face to face with the tribal ethic of our day, which has this still has the backing of solid citizens. What does that mean when we watched the conservative point of view of good men and good women threatening to twist out the focus or snuff out the insight of prophet and teaching of our Lord himself, you see God is such a (indistinct) so out to disregard the barriers that men, good men put up. We defeated the (indistinct) men out of Germany and pastor Niemoller rose in Germany to claim kinship with And smashed the Japanese military threat and Kagawa of Japan, shamed most of us in the United States, by the consecration of his Christian life. That is so hard for us to learn, God's ways are not man's way, that's often a brother, but it's regularly a fact and we must learn to accept it And work with it, the author of Ruth asked for vision. He being dead, you have to speak vision can see over and beyond the limits of our contemporary Nehemiah's and Ezra's who set up these linens in the name of God. That's another lesson to be learned from Ruth (indistinct) visioned we're more than that he had intelligent. Look at the strategy he employed to put his point across he used the method of indirection. He didn't bail out his peace from the house stuff, he didn't plaster Jerusalem with posters, David had foreign blood in his veins. or three cheers for (indistinct) He didn't throw up a petition and seek 5,000 signatures. he didn't call a strike he just dropped a hint and made an allusion, you slipped in a suggestion, he told a story, then he added a family tree. He was deliberately casual and discreetly intentional, but he sowed a seed that would grow like a weed. He fastened that tiny little bird that would stick in the mind of the hero, who was blessed with imagination. That's a lovely story, Ruth. She was David's grandmother, Isn't that nice? She's a fine ghetto, like they're (indistinct) David's great, grandma. Oh, Lord of hosts, What am I saying? She was a foreigner. What about now Nehemiah and Ezra? Well, what about, are they greater than David? Maybe their wrong, maybe separateness isn't holiness Hi, where is the man who told the story? He was away He was round the corner, telling it to somebody else. He had intelligence as well as vision. Now what a lesson in strategy, that are more ways of making one's point than by a frontal attack. Ooh their are times when I smash all, smashing frontal attack is necessary, but if we're beginning a work for God, or if we are alone in one of his projects or if we are in a very minority group, then remember the intelligent technique of the author of Ruth. He infiltrated, Jesus understood this matter of intelligent strategy he used humor, that wise catharsis when indignation would just to caused enmity. He talked about the foolishness of hunting for specks of surface in your brother's eye. When there was a plank sticking out of your own. Remember he was a carpenter and knew the difference between a plank and a speck of surface. Dickens and Nicholas Nickleby (indistinct) do the boys, preparatory schools out of England. And I remember when I taught an amos there was a retired professor in a new England town, that new England town, a stalwart deacon in the congregational church who wrote your mother's letters once a week to the local paper and caused the privately owned water company to sale its interests to the town In a repeated gale of laughter Now that's not true of all letters to the editor. One may have vision without becoming (indistinct) without mudslinging or (indistinct) migrating. There are times to you as the blessing method of indirection. That's just something idea Mr. Youth has to learn and it often doesn't want to learn it believe the only honest way to meet evil is head-on chest to chest, Toe-to-toe slugging it out to the end. Now I don't doubt either the vision or the honesty, but I recall some words of (indistinct) "The honesty of a good many persons is only stupidity asserting itself." Honesty, may be stupid, even when sincere go and talk to (indistinct) he will tell you it's wise to go round the ends or over the top. When one can't go through the middle, this isn't cowardice, This is intelligence at work So I spell out one local application. I'm glad that the duke Chronicle has won an

award in the Southeastern college newspaper competition Though the decision probably baffled as many people as it anger. What I miss in the Chronicle is a strategy of indirection. A suggestion rather than a sermon. A hint rather than a harangue A notch rather than a wall A campus paper seems to be constantly on the war pot for a person to slug, preferably an administrator. It behaves like a vigilantly or Carrie nation. It seldom smiles and rarely chuckles, it knows little of the emphasis of under emphasis or the power of the still small voice which is still effective blowing off to the sound as venge. I didn't inquire of Mr. Jones If the reason he asked me to preach this sermon again is because day in, day out, he deals at all levels with academic men who seems to take himself very seriously, who in great measure has lost a sense of humor Consequently, he has lost a sense of proportion Hence he is in congruous and thus out of place. It's wise in all areas of academic life to remember the 11 commandment or is it the 12th, "thou shall not take the self too serious." thou Shall not take thy self too serious especially when editing or lecturing or even preaching. When next you read the book of Ruth, allow yourself to be captured by its vision. The perspective of a God whose love overflows the limits, good people seek to impose on them, but don't forget It's less than an intelligence telling points can be made by indirection with a conscious (indistinct) vision and intelligence, are twin stars to set the journey The cause of our journey through life. Big bill knows that. That's why this is his sermon, come this time forth And even forevermore Let us pray. Almighty God, we thank thee for this little book of Ruth and as people let his words become flesh in us so that thy work may be done by us with vision and intelligence Amen. (piano playing) (choir singing) (soft music) (soft music) ♪ Holy, holy, holy ♪ ♪ Oh lord almighty ♪ (indistinct) ♪ Holy, holy, holy ♪ (indistinct) ♪ Holy, holy, holy ♪ ♪ Lord God Almighty ♪ (indistinct) (piano playing) ♪ Holy, holy, holy ♪ ♪ Lord God Almighty ♪ (indistinct) ♪ Holy, holy, holy ♪ ♪ Lord God Almighty ♪ (indistinct) (piano playing) (choir singing) ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ (indistinct) ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪

- Almighty and barrier breaking God our father Accept and use this our gifts for the ministries of the church in the world, we ask receive with our resources, the offering of our whole being, which we give to the one who gave his life to us and to the many who need the healing touch of his life Once again, made in Carney even Jesus Christ, our Lord Depart in peace to do God's work in the world and may the peace, the love and the grace of God, the father, the son, and the holy spirit go with you. (choir singing) (church bell ringing) (intense upbeat music)