

(somber music)

- Their old daughter at a birthday party, but she was attending at the home of one of her friends. As I went from my car across to the house, several giggling girls ran up to me and said, they would like to ask a question. The question was, how long will an eight-day clock run without being wound? Well, I was the sucker. I said, "Eight days," but this was not correct. It proved it will not run at all without being wound. Now, this cornfield conundrum suggests an elemental truth about clocks and a profound lesson about human values and human existence. It may even suggest new light on an old and familiar verse of scripture, which is John 3:17: God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Now, in order to see this light, which I say will be shed upon this verse of scripture, let us return to the clock conundrum for a little while and examine it. The elemental metal fact about clocks, which it suggests, is that clocks have a way persistently of running down, and they will not continue to run unless they are rewound. So that if you have a clock of some sort with you this morning, you have a device which does not have built-in perpetual motion. It has to be rewound periodically. Now, even electric clocks have this same principle. True of them, we have three electric clocks at our home, and they are in continual need of being reset or of occasionally being repaired. It seems that whatever kind of clock it is, the kind that has a spring or is operated by electricity or some other kind, the clock requires perennial attention in order to be reliable. Now, this is true of old clocks and of new clocks it's true of big clocks and little clocks. I am told there is a clock in the tower of the Strasbourg Cathedral, which is 30 feet high. Attached to this clock, and as a part of it, are a great many accessories and novelties of one sort and another. This clock a quite a item of interest to those who go to the Strasbourg Cathedral. It strikes every quarter-hour. And for example, when the first quarter-hour is struck, it is struck by the figure of an infant coming out and striking the bell with an infant's rattle. And the final quarter is struck by the figure of death coming out and striking the clock with a bone. What you might imagine that this clock requires a great deal of attention. It not only has to be wound, it has to be regularly serviced and repaired. Whatever clock it is, it has this built-in tendency to run down. And if you're going to continue to use it, the necessity of its being rewound. Now, this is true of the great spiritual realities of life. All of them, it is true of everything worthwhile in this world. There are no exceptions. There is a tendency throughout the universe for the things that are worthwhile to run down. At the beginning of this academic year, let us take a look at that and see what might be the significance which it would hold for us here at Duke University today. What is it about life that's worthwhile that runs down? Marriage runs down. It commences with romance with great devotion, it commences with idealism. Not some marriages, but all marriages have a tendency to run down for the devotion to slack off, for the romance to cool, and for the marriage to become humdrum. This is a tendency. There is a tendency for religious movements, which begin with great fervor and are started by revival meetings of one kind or another, which come into existence in response to a mighty stimulus and are built around a great idea and ideal, a great goal in human life and for the glory of God. Not some of these religious movements, but all of these religious movements have a tendency to grow cold, to become formalized and stale and to lose their momentum, to run down. This is true of individual religion. I am sure that under God, there is no exception

to this rule, that every person who commences a Christian life dedicated to Christ and to the glory of God, finds a tendency within himself to look to the past, to think of this moment of dedication, not to keep it alive, not to help it to grow and cultivate it. There's a tendency for all of these values to run down. Now, when we stop to think about it, this is not surprising. We've not been promised anything to the contrary. We have not been told either by God or by intelligent men that life is to be any different. This is really what we should expect, which one of you men, this morning, when you arose, thought about shaving, decided not to shave because you said, "Well, if I shave today, I'll still have to shave tomorrow." When you go to sleep tonight in your bed to rest up from the fatigue of this day, you will not be able to get enough sleep tonight, however long you stay in bed to make it unnecessary for you to return to the bed on the following evening. You can't get enough rest in one night to serve you for the rest of your life. You can't get enough food in one day to make it unnecessary for you ever to eat again. It is so with all of life, it is so with the clock that it has to be continually rewound, if it has to be usable. So it is with the great spiritual values of society and of the individual. Now we are faced at this point with a very practical question, we have to make a decision. The reason why I am going to mention what will seem at first to be something very elementary is, that although the answer to this question seems elementary, we do not always act in this way. When the clock runs down, what do we do? Throw it away? Buy a new one? Or do we rewind it? "Elementary my dear Watson," we say. We wind it up like any intelligent person would do. All right, so we do. So we don't keep buying a new clock every day of our lives, as long as we live. We assume it needs to be rewound, we rewind it. But do we act with as much elementary intelligence about the spiritual values of life? Do not assume too quickly that we do. A man about 30 years of age came to see me last year. A very intelligent man. He said, "I am having a great problem in my life. And that problem arises from the fact that my marriage has gone to pieces, it has run down. My wife and I loved each other very much. When we got married, we were entirely devoted to each other. There was a warm glow of romance about everything that we planned or did." He said, "The wedding ring on my finger then gave me a great sense of joy every time I looked at it." But he said, "Now that same wedding ring is an empty symbol. It means nothing because the devotion, the romance, is gone from our marriage." When I said, "What do you plan to do about it?" He said, "That's what I came to ask you, what I should do about it?" Well, it is obvious what he needed to do. I asked him if he remembered his wife's anniversaries, their marriage anniversary, her birthday. It seemed that he could remember her age, but not her birthday. He knew how many years they had been married, but he never remembered the anniversary. He had not told his wife in two or three years that he loved her because he didn't feel that he did love her as much as he did when they were first married. No gifts, no kindness. The marriage had run down. I suppose that he had thrown away this marriage and had obtained himself another one. If he behaved with regard to the second one, the way he had the first, it would quickly have run down also. This young man, intelligent as he was, needed to learn that the clock has to be rewound continually. That marriage is something which has to be renewed, which has to be brought into new existence again, regularly. Now I mentioned this mainly to serve as an illustration because this is not primarily a sermon on marriage to a student body, which is a largely single. I would like for you to remember this analogy and apply it to three great areas to which every student and faculty and staff member of Duke University should be challenged this year. Three great areas in which the clock can and does run down. Three great spiritual areas in which rewinding is necessary. Now, I would like for each of us this year to accept the challenge of rewinding the clock. First, the goals and aims, and ideals of Duke University. This university was founded by men who believed that it was important to join together in a creative tension, the values of religion and learning. *Eruditio et Religio*. And here was the

stated aim, which those founders affirmed and which the trustees reaffirmed officially this year. To assert a faith in the eternal union of knowledge and religion as set forth in the teachings and character of Jesus Christ. To advance learning in all lines of truth, to defend scholarship against all false notions and doctrines, to develop a Christian love of freedom and truth, to promote a sincere spirit of tolerance, to discourage all partisan and sectarian strife, and to render the largest permanent service to the individual, the state, the nation, and the church. Now, what is wrong with that as a statement of aims for this university? I submit to you that there is very little wrong with that, except for the fact that it has a tendency to run down and no generation that has preceded us could have done anything to make that statement of aims live for us in this generation, unless we choose to make it live. And it will live to the extent that we renew it and rewind it in our own lives this year and in this student generation. There was an individual who was a Duke here a few years ago, who looked about him and he saw some students who did not seem to be motivated by this ideal. He perhaps saw a faculty or a staff member, a trustee, or an alumnus who did not live by this statement of purpose. And so he said, this was a hollow mockery, and it meant nothing. The Duke University was not a spiritually oriented university. He had a perfect right to say that, but what he was doing was confessing his own position. There is nothing which anyone else can do to make the aims of Duke University live, if they do not live for you and for me and we, in turn, will not be able to make them live for those who follow us. We can only make them live or not make them live now, for those of us who are at the present time Duke University. And so we should, this year, assign ourselves to the task of making these a reality, vital and warm, and meaningful. Anytime you want to, you can assert a faith in the eternal union of knowledge and religion as set forth in the teachings and character of Jesus Christ. No one can stop you from advancing learning in all lines of truth, if you want to do it. You are perfectly free to defend scholarship against all false notions and ideas, if you set yourself to it. Anyone who wishes to can develop a Christian love of freedom and truth here at Duke University. How badly do we need here and everywhere to promote a sincere spirit of tolerance? This is for us to do, it's in our hands. We either do it and make it live, or we don't do it. And it is like the man said about his wedding ring, an empty and meaningless symbol, it will be what we make it. A few years ago, there was a student who graduated from Columbia University with an AB degree, and shortly thereafter, he entered suit against Columbia University to recover all of the fees and tuition, which he had paid the university. The reason why he wanted to recover it was he said that the catalog of Columbia University promised that the students who came to Columbia would be given both knowledge and wisdom. He admitted that when he graduated from Columbia, he had possession of a great deal of knowledge that he did not have when he first enrolled. But he said that he was not one wit wiser when he graduated than he was when he first entered. And so he said that Columbia University had broken its contract with him in that it had not given him any wisdom at all. While the court denied his appeal, not because it found any evidence that he had anywhere obtained any wisdom. But they denied his appeal because of technical reasons. Now it seems to me that both the student and the court overlooked the most important factor, which was that in order to obtain wisdom, this student would have had to have made the major effort himself. There was not anything which the university faculty or the university library could have done. It would have conferred or bestowed wisdom upon him unless he was earnestly seeking it. He was the reason himself, why he did not obtain wisdom. The aims of Duke University, fine as they are, will be real and meaningful only as we make them so. The second great area of spiritual values that has a tendency to run down and which, if it does run down, is very tragic. And to which we should call ourselves in this student generation to a rewinding is the spiritual goals of our nation. The United States of America was a name, which at one time made the pulse of

people all around the world, beat faster. The United States of America symbolized great things to the downtrodden masses of the earth and to every schoolboy and every factory worker and farmer and business executive all across America. Why? Because when our nation was founded, it was founded by people who believed in the spiritual ideals and purposes of any group of people. Be they a nation, a family, a church, or whatever. And so they unashamedly declared their trust in God. Stamped this upon our coins, made it our national motto. And in so far as a nation could declare its faith in God, the United States of America did so. We even erected a statue at the port of entry of the United States, facing as it were the entire world. And we put on that statue, these words, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, the tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" And so we were known, and so we considered ourselves as being a great democracy as being people who believed in freedom, both here and everywhere else who were unselfish, who were seeking to give to all men everywhere, the basic necessities of life, both material and spiritual. But my friends, I have to say to you, in all honesty, this morning that the clock has run down pretty badly. We are not so regarded around the world today. Our students who go into areas of service in Latin America, in Africa, in the Orient, and wherever, come back and tell us that the people over there look upon us as a nation, of drunkards, of home breakers, as a nation that is looking for what it can get from others. A nation that is trying to prop up decadent imperialism around the world. A nation that is willing to feed the starving, only if the starving will promise that they will vote with us the next time in the United Nations. That they look upon us as a nation, which denies to American citizens equality before the law in American institutions of education, a nation that looks upon us, a group of people who look upon us as a nation that has lost the spiritual ideal with which it began and for which it was willing to make sacrifice. Well, what should we do about this? Some people have taken a look at this and said, "Well, we are not what we once were. We are a post-Christian men. And so let us cast aside these meaningless symbols that do not any longer mean anything today and let us become thoroughly secularized, let us drop all pretense of being a spiritual people and let us become secularistic, neutralistic, meaningless. And if we have any religion, we will have it simply as private individuals, rather than as a nation." And they think of themselves as being avant-garde. And they may very well be avant-garde, but of what? The dark ages had their vanguard, let those who consider themselves avant-garde ask themselves, what it is they are the forerunners of? Unless we rewind the spiritual values, which alone made America great, our nation will degenerate. If the Lord does not keep the city, the person who attempts to keep it is attempting in vain. If the Lord does not keep the watch, the person who keeps it is awake in vain. And if God is driven out of America by our indifference and our voluntary choices, to be indifferent to God, we will deserve the ruin, which will come upon us. But I would like to believe that this student generation will dedicate itself to making live, what is on the Statue of Liberty to making the motto on our coins mean something rather than be an empty symbol, like the wedding ring. I believe this is worth every bit of devotion and sacrifice, which we can give to it. Now, the third great area in which our clock is running down to which the students of this generation and the faculty and the staff need to assign ourselves is with regard to the recovery of an understanding of, and commitment to the word of God. All of the art, the music, the literature, the ethics, and the governmental principles that have made civilization great have been derived from the Bible, from the word of God, the holy scriptures. And there was a time, there have been times in the past when people knew the Bible. Today, the average person does not know the Bible. He could not call the names of half of the books in the New Testament. He might be able to quote from memory 20 songs of the Elvis Presley variety. But about the only verse of scripture, he could

quote would be, "Jesus wept." We do not know the Bible today. We have some people who speak about biblical theology, but what they mean is what they have heard someone say the Bible means and teaches. There was a literary society in England only a few years ago that sponsored an essay contest. There was one person who decided to enter the essay contest dishonestly, but to prove a point. He took the Book of Esther in the Old Testament, changed the names of the principal characters and the place of location and turned it in as his entry into the contest with every other word exactly as it appears in the Bible. He won first prize. (congregation laughs) And when the prize was presented to him, there was a great flowery speech made saying what a genius this young man actually was that he could write so brilliantly. And nobody who read the essay, recognized it as being the Book of Esther. I wonder if you and I were called upon to read such essays written in this fashion, if we would recognize them, if they were to come from the Bible? Will, you look upon your courses in Bible, in this university as being not simply a means of passing off a requirement, but as an opportunity, really to come to know the word of God. Out of which greatness has come in every part of our culture and our civilization. And which if we lose, we will also lose the greatness of our culture and our civilization. We need to do what Isaac did, as read by President Hart a few minutes ago. When Isaac took command of his herds and his people, as he had inherited them from his father, Abraham. The first thing he did was to go out and dig the dirt out of the wells that had been stopped up by their enemies after the death of Abraham. He went out and dug the dirt out of the wells, which his father Abraham had dug. They were good wells, there was good water in them. The only trouble was that they had been filled up with dirt. He had the wisdom and good sense to renew those old wells. Perhaps the steps down to them are different from the steps that Abraham had built. Perhaps the approach to the well was different, perhaps many things were different. And I'm certainly not suggesting that we should return to the elements of greatness that those before us have had in exactly the same way that they approached them. But I am suggesting that the great ideals of Duke University, the spiritual commitments of the United States of America and the essential message of the word of God are springs of creativity without which we cannot safely do. And that in each of these areas, what we need is to rewind the clock. In doing this, we will follow the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who came to a world where the law-giver had come and had stated the law of God. People had followed it, then they had disobeyed it. A world where the prophets had come proclaiming the righteousness of God. The people had listened, and then they had fallen away. I presume that from the standpoint of strict justice, God would have had a perfect right to have sent his Son into the world to condemn it. But he didn't do that. He came here to rewind it and to make it better. God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Remember, one other thing Jesus said, "As the Father had sent me into the world, even so send I you." Christ is sending you and me into Duke University and into our country today, not to condemn it, not to give it up for lost, but to rewind it and be instruments of its salvation. Oh God, our heavenly Father, we thank thee that thou did not give up on us, but has continually sought to renew us and to call us back to thyself. Make us this day and this year instruments of thy grace for all mankind. And now may the grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you all.