

- Baccalaureate service for candidates for advanced degrees Duke University Chapel. May 17th, 1977, 3:00 PM. (soft instrumental music) (audience chattering) (soft instrumental music) (organ playing over singers) Beautiful ♪♪ Savior ♪♪ Lord of the nations ♪♪ Son of God ♪♪ And Son of Man ♪♪ Glory and honor ♪♪ Praise, adoration ♪♪ Now and forevermore ♪♪ Be thine ♪♪ Now and forever ♪♪ Now and forevermore ♪♪ Be ♪♪ Thine ♪ (soft orchestral music)

- One of our distinguished faculty members once said to realize its true purpose, a university must worship as well as work. You who now graduate have worked long and hard. We now with joy and thanksgiving come together again and in this special service to worship. Having sung praise to God, let us now join together as we confess our sins. Let us pray.

- Oh God, in whose mystery we abide and by whose mercy we are redeemed. We confess our sin against one another and against you, all our transgressions hidden and open the evil done and the goodness left undone. We have deceived ourselves about ourselves and worn masks and not trusted in love. We confess that we have been careful with things careless with persons, adept in taking, awkward in giving. In love with our fears and in fear of our loves. Forgive us for the times of our anger and the occasions of our stupidity. For the times of our cowardice and the places of our hesitation. For every time we did not love the goodness of persons, nor praise your glory. Forgive us, lift us up and heal us this day through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

- Let us continue in prayer with our personal confession. All mighty God have mercy on us forgive us all our sins, strengthen us in all goodness and keep us always in his grace. Amen. (soft orchestral music)

- Where there is no prophecy the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law. Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense. "At mid day oh king, I saw on the way a light from heaven brighter than the sun shining round me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It hurts you to kick against the goads. And I said, who are you Lord? And the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, but rise and stand upon your feet for I have appeared to you for this purpose to appoint you, to serve and bear witness to the things and what you have seen me and to those things in which I will appear to you, delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles to whom I send you to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." Wherefore O king of Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those at Damascus then at Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea and also to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God and perform deeds worthy of their repentance. (soft orchestral music) ♪ Amen ♪♪ All praise to the Father ♪♪ And to the Son ♪♪ And to the Holy Ghost ♪ (organ playing over singers) ♪ Amen amen ♪♪ Amen ♪♪ Amen ♪

- Let us affirm what we believe.

- We believe in God who has created and is creating, who has come into truly human Jesus to reconcile and make new. We trust God who calls us to be the church to celebrate life and its fullness to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus crucified and risen our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone, thanks be to God. The Lord be with you.

- And with your spirit.

- Let us pray. And some, oh, God are called to be teachers and engineers, researchers, doctors, lawyers, ministers, analysts, businessman and women. Leaders and planners for society. Healers and carers, for the minds and bodies and souls of others. Women and men who seek to respond to life with their body, their mind, and their spirit. For all good gifts and graces that make us uniquely who we are, oh God, we give you thanks and praise. We give thanks for this special company of folk gathered here today. Graduates, family, friends, loved ones. Teachers and colleagues, help us God to see things as they really are to call things by their right names, to claim our own vocation as valid and to live our lives with integrity and with clarity of purpose. We pray now O, God, these words for those who are about to graduate, those who came searching for little, but found much. Those who came expecting great things and were not disappointed. Those who have gained a glimpse, just a glimpse of their true potential. Those who have found excitement and new ideas and new concepts, those who feel that indeed they have reached a major milestone. Another step, an important moment on their way. Those who came thinking that education has its end in itself. And who leave knowing that it's end is to be shared with others. Those who have begun to know both the frustration and the joy of serving others. Well God, as you realize who we have been accept us for who we are and make of us who we are yet to be. We commend ourselves now to you, knowing that your love can care for us. Your mercy bless us and your grace sustain us. Hear us as we pray in your holy name and for your love's sake. And hear us as we pray together.

- 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. 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, power and the glory forever, amen.

- In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen. I ought to tell you that when I received the president's invitation to give this sermon, the first thing that popped into my mind was that with all the Smiths on this campus, surely he's made a mistake. And I remembered an afternoon much like this when it had unexpectedly rained and I was stranded in O'Hare Airport, in Chicago waiting for one of those Eastern flights that never seems to be on time and went into the shoe shop to watch a golf tournament in progress. And as I sat there, the manager of the shoe shop, finally, sidled up to me, leaned over and whispered in my ear. "You're Arnold Palmer, aren't you?" (audience laughing) And I said, no, I'm not, I wish I were. And a few minutes later, he came back and leaned over again and said, "Aren't you really Arnold Palmer?" And about that time, the golf tournament was in progress being done live and Palmer was walking down the fairway.

And I said, look, there's Arnold Palmer on the television. He said, "I know, very clever. This was taped earlier, and it's a broadcast now." He followed me when the tournament was out, finished into the major part of the terminal. And he said, "I don't want to annoy you too much, but would you mind showing me some identification?" (audience laughing) So, I pulled out my wallet and showed him a driver's license. He said, "You know, that's very clever. I think if I were famous, I'd have dual identity cards as well." (audience laughing) And then he produced a dollar bill and he said, "Would you sign this?" And I said, what's your name? He said, "Charlie." I pulled out my pen and wrote Charlie, good luck always, Arnold Palmer. (audience laughing) And that's how I answered the president's invitation. I said, I'll do it. But I guess that with a few notable exceptions, this is very likely the first time that most of us here have participated in a baccalaureate service of this sort. I've wondered as the weeks have gone by since the invitation was issued to me to preach this sermon, what we really are intended to be about here. 22 years ago, I sat where you're sitting, but I've never been on this side of the pulpit before, but as best I can recall the damn memory of that distant day in 1955, when I was sitting where you are, I think that I came along with the rest of my classmates out of a grudging sense of obligation, mixed generously with curiosity and not a little diffidence. Because after what had seemed a terribly long time in classrooms and carols, listening to lectures and writing papers and taking exams and worrying about a job for next year. I think that I had been so completely inundated and so thoroughly saturated by the immediate requirements for graduation that others had imposed upon me that by the time of commencement weekend, I had largely lost enthusiasm for those dreams and aspirations that initially had set my feet toward this goal. So I don't know. And of course have no way of knowing why you are here or what sorts of expectations you've brought to this service. But as I have reflected upon what I ought to say or what you'd wanna hear, or even what might be appropriate just now. I've come back again and again, to a single thought, the purpose of a university education is not to indoctrinate, but to lead people through disciplined inquiry and a search for truth. In part, that means that those of us who've been your teachers should have acquainted you with how alternative interpretations of data are possible and assisted you to be coherent and congruent in the interpretations you've chosen to make. And above all, perhaps we should have required you to make those choices with intelligence and discrimination and integrity and purpose. Those are not all, but they are some of the goals of a graduate education. I wanna tell you what you already know, and that is that you must do better than we've taught you. So initially I just wanna remind you of what you should already know that you probably embarked upon the studies for the degree, which bring you to this weekend with a certain vision, a dream, a prospect for who you wanted to be, what you wanted to become, a vision that may very well have been chastened and despoiled of its innocence in the meantime, but I hope that you still have it. Or if not the vision with which you began then another and better one by which you can leave this place to live a useful and happy life. By now, at least you ought to have a pretty good notion of who you are and what you can do and where you wanna make your mark. Couple of months ago, I had come home from Dallas with a genuine cowboy hat for our four year old son and like any child with a new toy he was initially obsessed with that hat. He wore it constantly and he pretended to be a real cowboy himself. But a few days later, he came to me wearing his Robin the Boy Wonder outfit. And he stood directly in front of me, looked me straight in the eye. And asked, "Who am I?" Well it's the game that we sometimes play. And so I guessed several wrong answers. You're a cowboy. You're Batman. You're the cookie monster. Finally I said, your Robin the Boy Wonder. He said, "That's right, you've finally got it." (audience laughing) But I thought were a cowboy, I said. "I was." He said, but not now. Then do you just change your identity from this to that to somebody else? "Yes." He said.

Then how do you know who you are? I asked. At that point, my son looking just a little annoyed pointed to the letter R on his Robin outfit. (audience laughing) "You see this." He said, "When you see this, I'm Robin." (audience laughing) But you can be so many different people, I said, how can I ever be sure? "Just look close." He said. (audience laughing) That admonition like much of the wisdom from children and others, not of course privileged to enjoy the sophistication and maturity we have achieved is I think right on target this afternoon. You've just completed requirements for an advanced degree from this university. And while, I may not be the first to congratulate you nor the first to welcome you into that process of continual education, which you embark upon this weekend. I may be the first and perhaps the only one to acknowledge quite candidly, that now we don't have to impress each other anymore, you and I, that's finished. So we can talk to each other out of some more profound and serious intention than to score points. But what isn't finished, what is only begun is that life of professional service for which your advanced degree, presumably equips you. Whoever named this occasion had it right far from being an ending, it's a genuine beginning. It's a commencement. And with it, you have earned the right to invest yourself in the most serious game that any of us play. The title I gave to this sermon may seem a bit frivolous to those of you who correctly made an association with poker may even seem unbecoming that I should've made that association myself. But when I was asked for a title, I thought that in some subtle and interesting ways an advanced degree commencement is sort of like jacks or better to open. (audience laughing) It's the minimal strength required to play the hand, this weekend, you have that hand dealt to you. That is you've got openers and the rest of your life will turn on how wisely or foolishly you play out the hand. Similarly, I chose the Old and New Testament lessons for this sermon because they both speak of the need for visions of how important it is for people to have rich and rhapsodic imaginations. And I also chose them because I hope that you burn with a great and creative vision that in some important way, this university has kindled in you. If you haven't yet lived long enough to verify it by your own experience, you should know history well enough to appreciate the wisdom of Solomon, where there is no vision, the people perish. And if you haven't yet been caught up in the ecstatic and transforming power of an insight, a discernment, or even a peak into recondite truth and mystery, you've surely known others who have. And in the face of that experience there are only two choices. You can acknowledge the vision and be obedient to it as in Paul did on that Damascus road, or you can reject it and disavow it, but at great peril to yourself and the rest of us. And in some, that's all I wanna say to you this afternoon, now that this strife is over and this victory won, now that it's all over, but the shouting, just take a close look at who you are at what you've become, at what you are equipped to do at how your own imaginative vision is at work to shape your own life and that of your brothers and sisters. Now, if you do that, that may be an exercise and introspection that most appropriately occurs in a religious context. And maybe that is one of the reasons that Duke continues to include a service of worship in this weekend celebration. Whatever else is going on here and whatever our private satisfactions with having achieved this level of academic distinction and whatever fond hopes or niggling fears for finding a job next year in a time of economic distress. This university by both tradition and intention has an interest in this service and preserves it I reckon in order to commit its labor and entrust its graduates to the care and service of God. That's why we are here. And whatever you might privately believe about God or why we are here or what all this pomp and ceremony means. I think that this is what brings us together to say thanks for what has been to celebrate what has come to be and faithfully to commit to God's care and keeping what is to become. So I hope therefore in the genuine and altogether appropriate joy of this commencement weekend, that you will nourish and sustain and imagining of yourself and our common

destiny, that can light the path to a hopeful and helpful future, a future full of justice and freedom and health and learning and all those other noble goals for which you've been trained and this brings me to the final observation. graduate and professional education takes place within and at its best, I think self-consciously acknowledges a pair of paradoxical commitments. On the one hand, we are committed to disinterestedness, to objectivity to truth, wherever we find it. And despite the threat it may pose to established and comfortable ways of perceiving ourselves and our world. On the other hand, we engage in this quest, we mount this enterprise in order to be involved in the social and economic and political process. We seek truth in order to be passionately engaged in its impact upon our common life. That paradox of the interplay between disinterestedness and involvement, in subtle ways is the burden of graduate professionals. It's also the reason that just any old vision won't do, that our vision must be of a particular sort, disciplined, faithful, obedient to truth, beauty, goodness. And if it's to be worthy of our commitment and serviceable to our neighbor, it must be self-consciously and warmly embraced. Three years ago, almost to this day, I visited the site of the former Nazi concentration camp at Dachau. It was a spectacularly beautiful Saturday afternoon. The sun was brilliant and lovely breezes swept over the Lago, Stresa, which was lined with poplars, which the prisoners themselves had planted. We entered the compound through a Carmelite convent, which is just outside the wall. At the end of the compound, where now three memorial chapels, Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish have been erected to the memory of the inmates in that camp. The Roman Catholic and Jewish memorials are not regularly staffed and they're used only on special occasion. But the Protestant chapel called the Church of Reconciliation has a resident chaplain, Pastor Christian Rager, who himself was an inmate at Dachau. At the time we talked, Pastor Rager was 70 years old, but more alert and active than some I've known who were half his age. And he provided me one of those landmark experiences in my life by talking with me for three hours that afternoon. I learned that 200,000 men and women pass through Dachau as prisoners. That's about 10,000 times this chapel filled to standing room only capacity. I learned that about 30,000 men and women died in that camp alone. I calculate that's about 15 times the number of people that would fill this chapel to standing room only capacity. After we talked for a while, Pastor Rager sent me off to the crematorium with a guide who himself had been an inmate and also a victim of the medical experiments which were conducted at Dachau. It was a grizzly tour. And inside the crematorium, I could swear that I smell burnt flesh. So I went outside for fresh air thinking that my imagination might be inducing that sensation, but even after going in and out four times, I could still smell it. So when I returned to Pastor Rager, I asked him whether it was possible 30 years after the fact that my mind had tricked my olfactory senses. No, he said, it's a genuine sensation because the bricks are porous and they've thoroughly absorbed the odor. As I was getting ready to leave, we were talking about how such a monstrous thing as national socialism could have happened, how the evil vision of Adolf Hitler could have achieved such eminence. How otherwise good and decent people like you and me could be seduced by a lust for power, which resulted in a horror of such proportion as this world hadn't seen. And Pastor Rager explained this to me, peering over his thick, horn-rimmed, obviously National Health Service issued glasses. "Hitler could not have risen to power." He said, "Apart from the indifference and the carelessness of the German people, they permitted it." Pastor Rager said because Hitler filled the vacuum created by the absence of vision." The pertinence of that assessment, particularly in the context of this sermon bears upon that paradox which I mentioned just a minute ago. The German people in the twenties and thirties had committed themselves to one aspect of this paradox, disinterestedness, but they apparently had neglected or rejected the other equally important feature, involvement. If it were in my

power to do it, I'd want you to understand that this is a temptation. This is a seduction to which people like us are particularly susceptible. The power and status, which our training and position vests in us easily turns into preoccupations with objectivity this passionate observation and analysis. And insularity from any self-conscious regard or accountability for the humane dimensions of our work. That's why I covered for you a vision, a prospect for the indispensability of passionate engagement in our common life. At the end of the conversation with Pastor Rager, he leaned toward me and in a voice barely larger than a whisper. He said, "You know, Professor Schmidt, there is no vision there is no risk. And there is no risk, there is no witness. And there is no witness, there is no hope." When I left Dachau that day, I was very deeply moved by what I had seen and heard. And I vowed then never to take lightly my obligation as a teacher, nor in so far as I could control it to allow my students to treat their education frivolously, because I knew emphatically that what goes on here makes a difference. So when we exited through the same Carmelite Convent of the Precious Blood, it's called, I bought this cross. It is blood red, enamel on bronze to help me remember that where there is no vision, there is no risk and where there is no risk, there is no witness. And where there is no witness, there is no hope. Today, you people have been dealt openers and the rest of us around the table are calling your hand. Now under God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you. The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord, make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace both now and evermore. Amen.

- Let us join together now in this responsive prayer of Thanksgiving and Commitment, let us pray. Oh God, we rejoice that we have learned together and have worshiped together. Now we bring before you the symbols and reality of our lives. (congregants response indistinct) We give thanks for the universe. (congregants response indistinct) For the earth. (congregants response indistinct) For communities and neighborhoods. (congregants response indistinct) For the revolutions, which shake our world. (congregants response indistinct) For the power of our learning. (congregants response indistinct) Or their perplexities, which confront us. (congregants response indistinct) For our heritage. (congregants response indistinct) For the visions of this university's students, staff and faculty. (congregants response indistinct) We are given the eyes of the spirit. (congregants response indistinct) The promise is to each of us, we may see, we may receive, we may love. (congregants response indistinct) Amen and amen. (soft instrumental music) ♪ How lovely ♪ ♪ Is thy dwelling place ♪ ♪ O Lord ♪ ♪ Of Hosts ♪ ♪ O Lord ♪ ♪ Of Hosts ♪ ♪ Thy dwelling place ♪ ♪ O Lord ♪ ♪ Of Hosts ♪ ♪ Oh Lord ♪ ♪ Of Hosts ♪ ♪ How lovely ♪ ♪ Is thy dwelling place ♪ ♪ O Lord ♪ ♪ O Lord ♪ ♪ How lovely is ♪ ♪ Thy dwelling place ♪ ♪ O Lord ♪ ♪ Of Hosts ♪ ♪ For my soul ♪ ♪ It longeth ♪ ♪ Yea, fainteth ♪ ♪ It longeth ♪ ♪ Yeah, fainteth ♪ ♪ It longeth ♪ ♪ It fainteth ♪ ♪ For the courts ♪ ♪ Of the Lord ♪ ♪ My soul and body ♪ ♪ Crieth out ♪ ♪ Yea, for the living God ♪ ♪ My soul and body ♪ ♪ Crieth out ♪ ♪ Yea, for the living God ♪ ♪ Yeah, for the living God ♪ ♪ How lovely ♪ ♪ Is thy dwelling place ♪ ♪ O Lord ♪ ♪ Of Hosts ♪ ♪ O Lord ♪ ♪ Of Hosts ♪ ♪ Thy dwelling place ♪ ♪ Oh Lord ♪ ♪ Of Hosts ♪ ♪ O Lord ♪ ♪ Of Hosts ♪ ♪ Blest are they ♪ ♪ O blest ♪ ♪ Are ♪ ♪ They ♪ ♪ That dwell ♪ ♪ That dwell ♪ ♪ Within thy house ♪ ♪ They praise ♪ ♪ They praise thy name evermore ♪ ♪ They praise ♪ ♪ They praise ♪ ♪ They praise, they praise ♪ ♪ They praise, they praise ♪ ♪ They praise, they praise ♪ ♪ They praise thy name evermore ♪ ♪ They praise thy name evermore ♪ ♪ They praise thy name evermore ♪ ♪ Praise, praise, praise ♪ ♪ Praise ♪ ♪ Praise ♪ ♪ Praise ♪ ♪ Praise ♪ ♪ Praise ♪ ♪ Praise ♪ ♪ Praise his name ♪ ♪ Praise his name ♪ ♪ Praise his name ♪ ♪ How lovely ♪ ♪ Is thy ♪ ♪ How lovely ♪ ♪ How lovely is ♪ ♪ How lovely ♪ ♪ How lovely ♪ ♪ How lovely ♪ ♪ Is thy dwelling ♪ ♪ Is the ♪ ♪ Dwelling ♪ ♪ Place ♪ (organ playing over singers)

- And now in conclusion, my friends fill your minds with things that are good and deserve praise, those things, which are pure, true, just, right, lovely and honorable. Put into practice the good you have learned and the God who loves us and cares for us and gives us peace will be with you this day and forever. ♪ Amen ♪
♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (upbeat orchestral music)