

(organ music) (organ music) (choir singing) (organ music) (choir singing)

- Hallelujah, the spirit of the Lord renews the face of the earth. Come let us adore him. Hallelujah. Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us confess our sins unto almighty God. Almighty God who sends the power of your holy spirit to fill the cycles with willing love to overcome confusion, to make us scouted people one with each other and with you. We confess that we have held back the force of your spirit among us. Our hatreds cause us to rebel against your desire for unity. By our arrogance is the community fractured. By our greed are the poor kept poor and righteousness thwarted. By our angers are wars begun and the humility firmly diminished. Have mercy on us, oh God. Let your tongues of fire burn away fears, our falseness, our pride. Feeling your spirit's cleansing embrace, prompt us to be makers of peace. For the sake of your son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen. Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness and by the power of the Holy Spirit, keep you in eternal life. Amen. Let us give thanks. For God is good and God's love is everlasting. Thanks be to God whose love creates us, whose mercy redeems us. Thanks be to God whose grace leads us into the future. Good morning and welcome to Duke University Chapel on this day of Pentecost. There are a couple of announcements. One is that there has recently been completed, an inventory of all of the magnificent stained glass windows, a photographic record of all these stained glass windows here in the chapel and this collection is going to be put in the university archives in the library, but before that happens, on Wednesday, May 25, there will be an informal reception downstairs in the chapel from 2 o'clock to 5 o'clock in the afternoon and there will be refreshments then and all of you who are so inclined and all of you that are listening on the radio who wish to view these photographs are welcome to do so then. That's Wednesday, May 25. Also the choir is constituted differently in the summer and there has gone out a invitation from Donna Sparks for all people who wish to try out and be members of the Duke University Chapel Choir during the summer. Please know that they can do that. Another announce that I'm sure all of you are interested and concerned about: the Reverend Dr. Robert Young, Dean of the Chapel, has suffered another heart attack, small heart attack, and is now convalescing in the Duke University Hospital. His attack came while on a fishing trip in South Carolina. Bob is expected to leave the hospital Tuesday or Wednesday of this coming week and to return home for a period of a month, for recuperation and repair, in preparation for a double bypass heart operation scheduled for later this summer. He specifically asked me this morning to request from you prayers and your good wishes. As always, Bob is chipper and in good spirits.

- As we prepare ourselves to hear God's word read and proclaimed, let us pray. Blessed Lord who has caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may and suchwise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them. That by patience and comfort of you holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which you have given us in our savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. The Old Testament lesson is Nehemiah 2:17-20. Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, "how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. "Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, "that we may no

longer suffer disgrace." And I told them of the hand of my God which had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work. But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they derided at us and despised us saying, "What is this thing that you are doing? "Are you rebelling against the king?" Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, "and we his servants will arise and build, "but you have no portion or right or memorial in Jerusalem." Here ends the reading from the Old Testament. The Epistle lesson is from Ephesians 2:11-22. Therefore remember, at one time you gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands. Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing, in his flesh, the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in the one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord in whom you also built into it for a dwelling place for God in the spirit. Here ends the reading from the epistle lesson. (organ music) (choir singing) Will the congregation please stand for the reading of the gospel lesson? The gospel lesson is from John 14:25-31. "These things I have spoken to "you while I am still with you. "But the counselor, the Holy Spirit, "whom the Father will send in my name, "he will teach you all things "and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. "Peace I leave with you; "my peace I give to you. "Not as the world gives do I give to you. "Let not your hearts be troubled, "neither let them be afraid. "You heard me say to you, "'I go away, and I will come to you.' "If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, "because I go to the Father "and the Father is greater than I. "And now I have told you before it takes place, "so that when it does take place you may believe. "I will no longer talk much with you, "for the ruler of this world is coming. "He has no power over me, "but I do as the Father has commanded me, "so that the world may know that I love the Father. "Rise, let us go hence." (organ music) (choir singing)

- Let us pray. Almighty, all wise and all gracious God, look now upon your servant, fill his heart with divine intent so that the words which come forth will redound to your glory, our uplifting and edification. Amen. When we live without walls. When we live without walls. This is Pentecost Sunday. Traditionally, this is the Sunday we celebrate the birth of the Christian church, not because the church actually began on Pentecost. For surely the church was already present in the lives of the disciples, during the life of Jesus and prior to his death and resurrection. But on Pentecost the spirit of God descended upon the church, empowering it for witness and mission, preaching and service. In the second chapter of Acts we get the picture of the spirit descending like a mighty rush of wind. So great was it that the disciples, the apostles, began to speak with tongues of fire. I suppose it's possible to read that passage and get the picture of a situation that was really perhaps, from one angle of vision, rather chaotic and rather confused, rather disarranged. For we can imagine not only were the apostles given to speaking in tongues or given to glossolalia, but to certain bodily

affections or paroxysm so characteristic of revivals during the 19th century and even now those kind of bodily spasms that some of us come to expect when we visit revivals. Indeed some of the onlookers on that day that the spirit of God descended concluded that the apostles were drunk with new wine, a strong, potent fermented wine. For them the situation was out of control, chaotic, but things are not always as they seem. Though it appeared that the apostles spoke in a foreign tongue, there were many who actually understood, in their own language, the glory of God at work. And while for some the situation was confused and disarranged, it seems to me that the apostles were given to this behavior precisely because there was, experienced at that very moment, an inner, great, magnificent peace. Ever since I came to understand the meaning of Pentecost, it seemed to me that the untold story of Pentecost was the peace that the apostles felt on that day. Yes indeed, the story of Pentecost is indeed the empowerment of the church by the work of the Holy Spirit, but so often we do not tell the story of the peace of that moment. So glad was I to find peace in our confessional prayer. And it's by no accident that in John we see Jesus leaving peace upon the shoulders and the work of the Holy Spirit. The kind of peace that I think comes through very clearly in Ephesians, the 2nd chapter verses 11-22. When I thought on this peace, my mind was directed to this passage over and over again. Who knows why, except by those categories of reasoning peculiar to the heart. But turning to the passage, I was immediately impressed with verse 14 in the 2nd chapter of Ephesians. Here the author, purportedly a pawling disciple of the next generation, depicts Christ in a most fascinating way. Christ is depicted as our peace. That is as the literal embodiment of the bond of our peace and that Christ broke down and replaced the wall of hostility that divides us at all levels of our social life. He broke them down. He replaced them and offered himself as a bond of peace. Now when it comes to describing divisions among men and women, the wall metaphor, and I'm sure you would readily agree with me, the wall metaphor is ancient. Indeed, if each of us had a proverbial dollar for each time the metaphor has been used, we would all be well beyond the financial problems and concerns posed by an inflated economy. But then it was not the wall as a symbol of human divisiveness that captured my attention. What caught my eye was the sense in which the metaphor in the context of this verse, verse 14, implies; and if this seems too harsh a word or hard a word, forgive me, but I think it's apt; the sense in which the metaphor in the context of this verse implies the very foolishness of building walls for the purpose of securing peace, securing peace both in the way of bringing about peace and protecting, or safeguarding peace, the foolishness of building walls for the purpose of securing peace. Now throughout the history of mankind, the building of walls figures prominently in the efforts of people to achieve and have peace. There are numerous biblical accounts of such and one that comes foremost to mind at the present time is the story of Nehemiah's commitment to rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, following its destruction in the summer of 586 B.C. For Nehemiah, the peace of Jerusalem was integrally tied up with reconstructing the great wall that once surrounded the city, the temple once refurbished and the inhabitants of the city could be secure only if the wall were rebuilt and so it was rebuilt. And so great a wall was it that at the dedication ceremony Nehemiah was able organize a magnificent and splendid procession upon the wall. Not at the base or the foot of it or in front or behind it, but upon the wall. What a great wall. A procession consisting of all the princes of Judah decked out in their finery, their gold and their jewels. A procession so large that Nehemiah had two great companies upon the wall, one to walk to the right and another to walk to the left, to dedicate and consecrate the wall. Yet, it's altogether ironic. For all that Nehemiah did in getting the wall rebuilt, little was actually accomplished in the way of securing peace for the city. You see, there is something about the nature of walls, something about the nature of walls. Often they arouse hostility and enmity, both without, sometimes we expect that,

but also within their boundaries. In the book of Nehemiah for example, we are informed that the wall intensified hostility between the Jews and their enemies: Sumerians, the Ammonites and others. And at the same time, it fostered dissension among the Jews themselves. The enemies stood out from the wall and looked over and began to rumble saying, "You know, those Jews are at it again. "Are they plotting against the king? "Well let's see. "Let's not be too hasty. "Let's see what they can do with that wall. "Can actually revive the stones out of the ashes? "If so, we need to confuse their effort." And for the Jews their fields were growing over and some were, in point of fact, actually losing their land, because the building of the wall required so much time and some feared that they might go hungry, that they might be sold into slavery in order to pay the taxes and pay the debts. Dissension within. Hostility without. Walls have a curious nature. To be sure, they do serve a positive function and purpose and I will be among the very first to acknowledge that there are times when they are necessary. For example, I think of how necessary it was or might have been for the Chinese to build a great wall, Changcheng, the Sui and the Ming dynasties, given that they, like some many people during the time, were people who were constantly being invaded. It seems to me to have been the logical and perhaps practical thing to do or at least attempt to do. And over the years, perhaps we can say it worked to a reasonable degree, in keeping potential invaders at bay, at least until the advent of modern weaponry and modern warfare. But certainly, in terms of helping China to secure peace we might readily agree that overall the wall has done little. For despite hundreds and hundreds of years of the wall's existence, China, like most nations, if not all nations, is still a country very much at war with itself. Just last year, I had an opportunity to dialog privately with a resident of the Republic of China. We hit it off very well. In the first 30 seconds, I think, he had my favorite pipe tobacco, my Bull Durham and in the next 30 seconds he had my favorite pipe, one which I have not been able to replace. My heart just went out to him and I said take it all. Good think I couldn't give him my clothes. With both of us speaking through an interpreter from the U.S. State Department, it did not take me long, however, to realized that China, despite the very positive image we so often get in the news media, at least at the present time, that China is a country very much divided along ideological, economic, racial and religious lines. I guess I was somewhat caught off guard when he referred to the religious problem in China. It turns out that he was muslim. I did not know that there were muslims in China. And as a muslim, he was a member of a very small minority who suffered one type of discrimination after another. To bring this matter of the nature of walls closer to home: not long ago my wife and I had, and I suppose it would really be stretching the point if I said walls. My language most certainly would be hyperbolic. We had a fence built around our backyard, so that neighbors' children would not move indiscriminately through our yard and so that we might also check the comings and goings of our neighbors' dogs. We thought that if we put this fence up our minds would be at peace. Interestingly, when I talked with my wife about this fence just a few days ago, I learned that she worried about the fence every day, like I worry about the fence. Have they torn it down at some point? Have they destroyed our property? If some of the children have, what will we say and how will we say to their parents they must stop? I have no peace of mind with that fence. Well all of this is to say, and this brings me to my first major point and I shall not be long. This brings me to my first major point. Building walls does not secure peace and yet each of us goes about our daily living as if the inverse were true. Daily, even hourly, we build walls all around us, individually and collectively, as families, as special interest groups, as communities, as races, as denominations. You know, we have a certain attitude about the Pentecostals who tend to be far open and receptive to paroxysms and glossolalia and charismatics. Some of us far more reluctant about that kind of thing. Well some people who are far more in that camp of things look askance at others who are not as open

to paroxysms, bodily spasms and speaking in tongues. We build walls around us too, as nations. Not only denominations, but nations as well. We let our opinions and we let our customs and we let our habits and we let our biases and we let our preferences and our wishes and our desires function errantly. Properly understood, they should function in a way that they enrich the meaning of our living, function in a way that we can appreciate the variety and the diversity of God's handiwork. But too often the function as walls which keep others unnecessarily at bay and walls behind which we see cyclical, emotional and spiritual space, in a futile attempt to be at peace. We cannot find, however, peace in this way, as the author of Ephesians was well aware. In the King James translation, there is also a reference in the 14th verse to the middle wall partition in the temple, which restricted gentiles to the outer part of the sanctuary. Only Jews, by law and by custom, were allowed to go beyond the partition into the inner sanctum. Reference to the partition is significant. For the author wishes to convey symbolically that Christ renders obsolete and irrelevant all things that would divide mankind. For the author of Ephesians, the partition in the temple was meaningless to the Christian, be he a Jewish Christian or a gentile Christian. The partition was meaningless. When we try to understand why we are so often divided by opinions and by customs and by biases and so forth and so on, it becomes apparent that we are prone, in our culture, to confuse happiness and contentment with peace. I recall very clearly right now one statement made during the 19th century on the part of a pro-slavery preacher, a statement made from the pulpit, "We cannot be happy if blacks are to be free." So it seemed that slavery was important, in order for him to be happy. We confuse happiness and contentment so often with peace. Happiness and contentment are not synonymous with peace. Happiness and contentment can be a part of peace, but certainly peace cannot be reduced to happiness and contentment. Happiness and contentment are at best moods. They come and they go. They are moods which we so often mistake for peace and I dare to say even now that we confuse bliss with peace. I would not say that bliss is a mood. I would perhaps say that bliss is a process, a process of pursuing avenues of escape from reality. That's why we have so many people trying to find the road by indulging in drugs and alcohol, abusing those things, only to find out if that road is traveled too often, it leads to a certain eternal death. Bliss is not peace. Peace is a process too. But authentic peace is the process of being made whole, made whole.