

(epic organ music) (enigmatic organ music) (footsteps clocking) (enigmatic organ music) (enlightening organ music) (footsteps clocking)

- Grace sent peace to you in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. We welcome each of you to this service of worship at Duke University Chapel, and hope that you will be able to join us again in the very near future. It's a special pleasure today to greet Mr. Stephen Sharon, who is our new summer choir director for this summer. We look forward to the contributions that he and the choir will be making this morning and throughout the summer, and I would like to invite any of you, who are interested in joining the choir to please call the Chapel Choir Office at 684-3898. Just a couple of corrections in today's bulletin. The congregation at Duke University Chapel and interdenominational group are persons who regularly worship here at the chapel are having an organizational meeting today immediately after the service, not at 12:30, and it will be held here in the North Ex. At this meeting, a plan of organization will be presented and discussed. Due to an unfortunate error in the printing of today's bulletin, you will find that a major portion of the order of service is on the wrong page. If you look at the Gloria on page two, you will find that the second lesson was moved to the next page. We will have our usual order of service, which means the second lesson, anthem, Gospel and sermon will be immediately after the Gloria. Responses and offerings will come in their usual place after the sermon. You are reminded that the service of Holy Communion will be celebrated today immediately after service in the Memorial Chapel. And now, let us prepare ourselves to worship God. (echo drowns choir hymn) (dramatic organ music) (organ music and echo drowns choir hymn)

- Dear brothers and sisters, when we examine our lives honestly, we become aware of our many sins and shortcomings. With humbleness and deep penitence, let us now confess our sins before Almighty God. Be seated. (ruffling and screeching) Most merciful God.

Congregation: We confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word and deed. By what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of Your son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways. To the glory of Your name, amen.

- Here are the good news. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That is God's own proof of His love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

Congregation: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven, amen.

- Let us pray. Open our hearts and minds, oh God, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, so that as the Word is read and proclaimed, we might hear with joy what You say to us this day, amen. The first lesson is taken from Acts. In those days, Peter stood up among the brethren. The company of persons wasn't all about 120,

and said, "Brethren, the Script-ion had to be fulfilled, "which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand "by the mouth of David concerning Judas "who was guide to those who arrested Jesus. "For he was numbered among us "and was allotted his share in this ministry." So one of the men, who have a cup-ni-das during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us, one of these men must become with us, a witness to his resurrection. And they put forward to Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus and Matthias. And they prayed and said, "Lord who know us, the hearts of all men. "Show which one of these two Thou has chosen "to take the place in this ministry and apostleship, "from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." And they cast lots for them. And the lot fell on Matthias. And he was enrolled with the 11 apostles. This ends the reading of the first lesson.

- Will you please stand for the reading of the Psalter? Happy are those who reject evil counsel, who do not approve of the conduct of sinners, who do not sit among those who marked God.

Congregation: Instead the Lord's teaching so delights them, they ponder it day and night. Becoming like trees transplanted near water, they bear much fruit and season. Their leaves do not wither. And all that they do turns out well.

- Not said of the guilty, they are like winds scattered husks.

Congregation: They will not last through the Judgment. The righteous assembly will not include sinners. The Lord approves of the deeds of the righteous. But an evil life leads only to ruin. (epic organ music) (organ music and echo drown choir hymn)

- You may be seated. The second lesson is taken from the First Letter of John. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony of God that He has born witness to His son. He who believes in the son of God has the testimony in himself. He who does not believe God has made him a liar because he has not believed in the testimony that God has born to His son. And this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life. And this life is in His son. He who has not the son has not life. But he who has the son, has life. I write this to you, who believe in the name of the son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. This ends the reading of the second lesson. (organ music) (organ music and echo drown choir hymn)

- A reading from the Gospel according to Saint John. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, which Thou has given me that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name, which Thou has given me. I have guarded them and none of them is lost but the son of perdition that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now, I am coming to Thee, and these things I speak in the world that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Thy word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray that Thou shouldst take them out of the world but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth. Thy Word is truth. As Thou did send me into the world so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake, I consecrate myself that they also may be consecrated in truth. Here ends

the reading of the Gospel lesson. For the two years before I entered seminary, I needed a job. So I worked with the Metropolitan Public Defender in Portland, Oregon. During that time, my responsibilities included working with the clients assigned to our office to develop alternatives to incarceration. This meant getting to know the clients as well as possible, sorting through the reasons why they were getting into trouble, and in consultation with other professionals, making a recommendation to the court for a treatment plan that might be used as an alternative. Unusual preparation for ministry, you might be thinking. Indeed it was but helpful in a number of ways. The hard lessons I had to learn about evil, human behavior, injustice, poverty were too numerous to mention. But there was another invaluable aspect to my work in the Public Defender days. And that was in learning to testify, bearing witness to the truth before the court. Appearing on the witness stand was something I had to do a lot and I had to learn to be comfortable with it. But I remember the first time I stood before a somber courtroom with my right hand raised, and my left hand placed upon the Bible. "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? So help you, God." Feeling the heat of the judge's stern glance upon the nape of my neck, I wasn't sure anything would be forthcoming from my mouth. I was so intimidated. Yet the heavy silence of the courtroom demanded a response. "I do," was my humble reply. To be a witness, at least in the secular sense of the word is crucial to our culture in the way that we go about determining the truth. In lieu of crystal balls or other such means of discernment, we acknowledge in this society, the testimony of witnesses as validation to a claim. Take weddings for instance. We have a lot of them around here. Even after the benediction is pronounced and the recessional is completed, nothing is binding until the necessary signatures including two witnesses are procured on the marriage license. In a court of law, the jury is required to hear all the witnesses presented by both sides, and out of this composite testimony to discern the truth, even when the claims are competing. Witnessing incurs certain responsibilities. A witness at the scene of a crime is bound by law in almost every case to be available for testimony. And if that witness then fails to tell the truth on the witness stand, he or she is committing a criminal act on its own. Certain witnesses even seem to have the power to draw curious onlookers for miles around as they await to see what important piece of evidence will be revealed next. Witnessing, at least in terms of civil and criminal law, we are not only accustomed to and respectful of, we are attracted by it. But there's another type of witnessing, one which strikes a slightly different chord in most of us. I was busily preparing dinner one evening for guests when I heard a persistent rapping at my front door. Annoyed by the poor timing of such an interruption, I opened the door to find an unfamiliar, though earnest face. I immediately noticed what I presumed to be a stack of religious tracts in his hand. "Do you mind if I borrow a few minutes of your time?" The young man asked. "Well, quite frankly, I do," I responded. "I'm expecting dinner guests in the very few minutes." "Perhaps we could talk in the kitchen then?" He asked. "No, I don't think so." "Now, this may surprise you but I'm a minister. I think your time would be better spent elsewhere." With an apologetic and slightly wandering on look on his face, he thanked me and turned to leave. But it was only a matter of seconds 'til I wondered if I was the one who owed an apology. Witnessing in the religious sense inevitably provokes a different response than witnessing in the civil sense. More personal in nature and often more confront-ive. The one who chooses to witness to us about faith, be that in the middle of the street or at our front door disarms and somehow even slightly embarrasses us. We feel put upon, on the spot, a little defensive, particularly if we happen to disagree with this particular form of witnessing. Now, here on campus, this is a current concern. The question of witnessing to one's faith can be cause for heated discussion. What religious group should be visible on campus? What method of recruitment should be allowed? What manner is appropriate for an individual to

witness publicly to his or her faith? There are no simple answers for a community such as a college campus, where religious freedom and freedom of expression are held in high regard. Yet how dull our conversations would be if there were no opportunity for voicing differences and opinion on matters as important as religion. For Christians, witnessing, problematic as it may seem, much of the time, is a vital aspect of our faith as today's readings remind us. Without those who witnessed to the realities of Christ's Resurrection in the days following His Ascension, there would be no Church. In today's lesson from Acts, we find these followers of Jesus gathered in Jerusalem, discussing the matter of witnessing to what they had just seen. How else would they spread the Word? Christ had said to them at the time of His Ascension, "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, "and in all Judea and Samaria, "and to the end of the Earth." Thus, the apostles were responsible for determining just how this witnessing would proceed. It was Peter, the Rock, an acknowledged leader of the group who stood up among the people about 120 of them to proclaim, "Friends, the Scripture had "to be fulfilled concerning Judas. "He was one of us and was allotted "his share in the ministry. "So one of those who has accompanied us "during the time we've been with Jesus, "one of you must now be with us a witness "to the Resurrection." A murmur swept over the crowd. Who was up to this monumental task? Perhaps more than one was anxious to be elected. Justice, one person nominates from the corner of the room, Matthias answers another. The nominations were closed. They all prayed to God to direct them in their choice but lots were cast and Matthias was the one to be chosen. The Circle of 12 was thereby restored. It now represented, not only the 12 tribes of Israel, but it pointed towards the coming, already dawning Kingdom of God. This Circle of 12 now told the full tale of both the old and new people of God. Interestingly enough, neither Justus nor Matthias are heard from again in the Biblical record. And that's left out to our imaginations to decide what became of them. Are we to interpret their absence from Scripture as indicating a breakdown in their commitment to witnessing in the name of the risen Christ? Surely, that would be using a criteria far too narrow for determining their actual contributions and likewise, for other groups not recorded in Scripture, such as the women. The women of that community referred to in the passage immediately preceding today's lesson from Acts, referred to not by name but simply as the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus. In Jewish law, we know that women and slaves were not even qualified to serve as witnesses in legal matters, yet we know, there were no such restrictions placed on witnessing to the Resurrection. For as we remember, it was Mary Magdalene, who was the first to encounter the risen Christ. We all know it's not just those whom history records that make up history itself. Indeed, in the development of the Christian community, countless saints shall remain forever nameless, who have devoted their lives to proclaiming the faith. They formed a company, which I called invisible witnesses, forgotten in the eyes of the world, but surely not in the Kingdom of Heaven. It is their composite testimony, recorded or not, a literal patchwork of experiences of service, prayer, praise and thanksgiving, penitence, deeds of justice, mercy and love that continue to reveal the testimony of God through the Church. Less we ever think of the Church, only as being made up of those, whose witness has been acknowledged by history. Let us remember the Church includes all believers, both visible and invisible. This text from Acts is important for us today. They are not only for what it says about the leadership of the Church, the 12, who were charged to witness but for what it suggests about the place of all believers in the witnessing community. Having been misinterpreted on occasion, the election of Matthias to the 12 has been seen as providing a basis for a distinction to be drawn between the clergy, and the laity, and the work of the Church, and therefore somehow elevating the clergy to a higher status in the Christian community. And I'd like to speak to this for a moment. The word lot, as in the lot, fell on Matthias meant receiving his share in the

ministry as something that was given to him and not something which he had earned for himself. This word, which was translated *Claros*, however came to be associated by the third century with those who held ecclesiastical office, now known as clergy, implying that those who held such offices are the special property of the Lord or the Lord is their lot, their share. In the early years of the Church, this use of this distinction led to a tension between clergy and laity, and to an unnecessarily limited view of the rights and responsibilities of the laity. The clergy was accorded an increasingly privileged position and grew into a new sociological class with its own privileges, immunities, dress, titles, duties, culture and liturgy. The problem with this distinction however, is that the Church has never had this in its own scriptural basis. In the early Church, there were differences in spiritual gifts and of tasks to be fulfilled but there was no distinction between a group called clergy and a group called laity. The Word *Claros* rather than implying a special relationship to God by those who held office referred in a much broader sense to a share in the Word of God, especially a share in eternal life. Such a share is obviously not the sole possession of any special group but it is given to each individual who believes in the communion of all believers. The lot, which originally belong to Judas, and which through the election fell to Matthias is therefore a share in the Kingdom of God which falls to each of us as believers. He who believed in the son of God, has the testimony in himself, we read in 1 John 5. He who has the son of life, he who has the son, has life. He who has not the son of God, has not life. Thus in this matter of witnessing, is it really an option for the believer? A matter of mood or convenience? Something to be left up to the clergy on Sunday morning or to the religious enthusiasts on the street corner? For the believer, the very presence of the Spirit in our lives becomes a testimony, which is obvious to those around us. We find ourselves revealing our true convictions, when we don't even realize it. It's not just in public places but in the deepest, most secret parts of our lives. The kind of place where there is no one to impress of our religious fervor, only God. Think of the last time you encountered that type of witness. Rather than being aggressively Christian in their witness, was it not the depth of their generosity, their kindness, their sincere desire to serve that was transforming in some mysterious way, akin even to the witness of Christ. I think of many such witnesses, unsung heroes, whom I have known in the community of faith, Sunday school teachers, communion stewards, a friend to lean on in a time of need, add your own to the list. Though their witness may remain forever invisible to history and even to much of the surrounding community. I affirm their place in the Church today as indispensable in the telling of the Christian story. We all know from experience, Christian witness takes as many different forms as there are individuals and personalities in the community of faith. And there are none of them that we can afford to do without. Even as every shred of testimony is essential to discovering the truth in a court of law. So every Christian witness is important in revealing God's testimony through Christ. If we receive the testimony of men and women, the testimony of God is greater. Could it be that Christian witness has been kept in a box on the shelf too long for too many, taken down when useful but rarely integrated into the everyday fabric of our lives. I offer you no preplanned instructions for effective witnessing. Rather as the earliest Christians had to chart their own course of action, let us rise to the occasion today by becoming comfortable with our own faith and free to share it in ways that feel natural and that give life. If the son of God truly lives within us, surely there is reason to rejoice. Let us share it wherever we may be. Thanks be to God. (organ music) (organ music and echo down choir hymn)

- Let us affirm what we believe by joining together in the Apostles' Creed.

Congregation: I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth. And in Jesus Christ's only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate was crucified, dead, and buried. The third day, He rose from the dead. He ascended into Heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and a life everlasting, amen.

- The Lord be with you.

Congregation: The Holy Spirit be with you.

- Let us pray. A Lord of all creation and Lord of our lives.