

(dramatic organ music) (footsteps walking slowly)

- Good morning, we'd like to welcome you to the service of worship in Duke Chapel. There are few announcements I'd like to call to your attention. Immediately following the service, the congregation of Duke Chapel will provide refreshments in the south arcade. This evening, the congregation's annual service will be held at five o'clock p.m., followed by a potluck dinner in the chapel basement. In honor of the occasion, members of the congregation are wearing blue ribbons today. And we hope that you will return for this occasion this evening. There is one correction to the bulletin. The healing service listed is scheduled for October 6th instead of today. We will be offering a healing service on the first Sunday of each week, of each month. I'd like to point out one feature of our service today. During communion today and for the rest of the year, we will sing the music of Taize, which is known for its meditative and prayerful quality. We invite you to enter into the spirit of this music. Now, let us continue with the call to worship, please stand. We have heard the stories of our God. (congregation reciting prayer) We will not hide them from our children. (congregation reciting prayer) We will tell the glorious deeds of the Lord. (congregation reciting prayer) (dramatic organ music) (congregation singing with dramatic organ music) (dramatic organ music) (congregation singing with dramatic organ music)

- God helps the afflicted and is near to the broken-hearted. Let us confess our sins together using 180 at the back of the hymn book. Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed. By what we have done and 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 names, to the glory of your name, Amen. Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive 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. You may be seated. (congregation taking their seats) (coughing loudly)

- Let us pray the prayer for illumination. Open our hearts and minds oh, God, by the power of your Holy Spirit. So that, as the Word is read and proclaimed, we may hear your message with joy this day. The New Testament reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to the Philippians. For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means, fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I prefer. I am hard-pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ. For that is far better. But, to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy and faith. So that, I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again. Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ. So that, whether I come and see you, or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side-by-side with one mind, for the faith of the Gospel. And are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them, this is evidence of their destruction but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For He has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ but of suffering for Him as well.

Since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had, and now, hear that I still have. This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

(congregation reciting prayer) The second reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace and he said to them, you also go into the vineyard and I will pay you whatever is right. So, they went. Went he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock, he went out and found others standing around and he said to them, why are you standing here idle all day? They said to him, because no one has hired us. He said to them, you also go into the vineyard. When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then, going to the first. When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now, when the first came, they thought they would receive more. But, each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner saying, these last worked only one hour and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. But he replied to one of them, friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last, the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous? So, the last will be first and the first will be last. This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

(congregation reciting prayer) (footsteps walking slowly)

- The New Yorker carried a cartoon of a father in church sleeves, slumped down in his easy chair, a drink on the side table. He's attempting to relax while his 10-year-old son ask, say, Pa, where do you stand in pecking order? Peter asked Jesus a similar question that would prompt him to tell the parable of the landowner. Peter said, look, we've left everything and followed you. What then, will we have? What will it get us? Where do we stand in the pecking order? And just after this parable, the mother of James and John came to Jesus to negotiate the position of her two sons. She wanted Jesus to assure her that one of them would sit on his right hand and the other on his left. Even these that had given their lives to follow Jesus were concerned with the pecking order. They wanted to know how they stood in relation to others. Would they come out on top? Would they be winners in the end? Would they get the grand prize for all that they had given up to follow Jesus? Jesus assured them that they would gain 100-fold what they had given up, as well as eternal life. But He added those disturbing, cryptic words, many who are first will be last and the last will be first. And then, He told the parable which ends with that same formula. So, the last will be first and the first will be last. The parable of the landowner and the workers in the vineyard has to be one of the most unsettling parables that Jesus ever told. When we hear it, it immediately strikes us as unfair. One group of laborers got up at the crack of dawn to be the first ones waiting in line at the marketplace, to be hired as day laborers. They took the initiative to get there early. And they were the type of workers who would've been the backbone of any labor force. They were self-starters and hard workers who could be depended upon to do a good job. They negotiated a fair wage with the landowner and immediately went to the vineyard to get to work. They worked diligently from six a.m. until six p.m., through the scorching heat of the day. And there's nothing in the parable to suggest that the landowner was displeased with either the quality or the quantity of their work. But realizing that the work could not be finished by the first laborers hired, the landowner

returned to the marketplace at nine a.m. And when he saw workers standing idle, he added them to this workforce, agreeing to pay them whatever was right. He returned again at noon and at three o'clock and did the same thing. At five o'clock, he went once again to the marketplace. And when he found others standing around idle, he asked them why they were still there idle? They said, no one had hired them. So, he sent them to his vineyard at the eleventh hour of the day. Well, everything was fine up to this point. We can only imagine that those who had been working as hard as they could, as fast as they could, through the heat of the day, were glad for the help. It meant that the workload would be shared and their burden would be a little bit easier. But then, came the time for the wages to be given out. It was customary for those who were hired first to be paid first. So, they were surprised when they were asked to line up backwards, from the last hired to the first hired. And when the manager started giving out the pay, a rumble of shock and then excitement went down the line. Those who had worked only one hour, about a twelfth of the day, were given a denarius instead of the usual 1/12 sum. Doing a little quick calculation, the workers who had worked the longest, figured they would go home with a bundle. But then, those hired at three o'clock also got a denarius, which was certainly generous but somehow, not quite fair. Then, those hired at noon, got a denarius. And the workers hired first, began to see the handwriting on the wall. Their anger grew white hot, as those who were hired at nine a.m., were given a denarius. And when the manager handed them a single denarius, it was more than they could take. They were furious and grumbling amongst themselves. Until one of them got up the nerve to speak out to the landowner. These last had only worked one hour and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. It's not fair. It goes against every principle of justice and fair play that we live by. We're considering filing a class action lawsuit. But the landowner said, I haven't done anything wrong to you. I paid you what you bargained for. I've met the terms of our contract. So, take what belongs to you and go. It's none of your business if I choose to pay these others what I paid you. It's my money and I can do what I choose with it. Are you envious because I'm generous? You bet they were, and with good reason. Who wouldn't be envious of someone who received the same pay for working 1/12 of the day in the coolness of the afternoon. Even a child could figure out the injustice of that. Equal pay for equal work is fair. Equal pay for unequal work is not fair. Rewarding those who do the most work is fair. Rewarding those who do the least work is not fair. Treating everyone the same is fair. But treating everyone the same when they are not the same, is not fair. Can you imagine anyone running a business like that? After the first day, no one would show up for the first shift. You'd have a labor force made up of slackers who would do as little as possible, as late as possible, trusting that they would be rewarded regardless of what work they done, because of the benevolence of the owner. Our whole economy would be turned upside down. But that isn't the world we live in, is it? Thank goodness or nothing would ever get done. No, we trust that as long as we work hard and play by the rules, we will be fairly rewarded. We know our place in the pecking order and what to do to move ahead a few notches. We're good at playing the game. We've studied hard, gotten the right grades, joined the right clubs, gotten the right credentials and the right jobs, moved into the right neighborhoods. We are first in line, first hired, first rewarded. But, Jesus said, the last will be first and the first will be last. That's why a parable like this is so disturbing to us. It threatens the prerogatives of privilege. Jesus seems to be saying that all our hard work, the position and the credentials that we have earned, count for nothing with God. The Lord of the vineyard refuses to be bound by our value system. And our method of judging one person's worth over against another's. There's another set of criteria at work. We can't secure God's favor on the same quid pro quo basis that we use everyday. In the parable, Jesus is speaking against any legalistic understanding of religion.

He's opposing the popular notion that one can pray enough or sacrifice enough or work enough to earn a place in heaven. According to this view, at the end of life, God tallies our good deeds and our bad deeds and determines what our reward or punishment should be. It sees God as the great score keeper in the sky who can be trusted above all things to be objective and fair. If this were God's way of dealing with humanity, it would be shameful and unjust for the person to enter God's service at the end of life, to receive the same as those who had toiled and worked all through their lives. But, Jesus has been trying to get across to the disciples, every way that he knew how. That, God is not a dispassionate score keeper, tallying up their losses and gains. But, a caring father concerned for their well-being. God is not a hard-edged business owner interested only in the bottom line. But, a compassionate friend who values their relationship more than that outcome of their efforts. God is not a judging tyrant doling out rewards and punishments. But, a loving Savior offering Himself as a means to abundant life, now and eternally. And for most of us, that is very good news. For if you're like me, you're much better off not being judged on the basis of what you deserved. Because when I think about what I've done in God's vineyard, I'm much more like the workers who showed up at the end of the day than those who began at dawn and worked diligently all day long. There's so many things that I've meant to do that I somehow never got around to doing. And there were so many things that I meant not to do but wound up doing anyway. In God's pecking order, I'm afraid, I'd be somewhere way toward the back of the line. The prayer of confession that we prayed, fairly describes most of us. Most merciful God, 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. Thank goodness, God is not fair. God is merciful. For reasons we may never know, God seems to love us indiscriminately and seems also to enjoy reversing the systems that we set up, to explain why God should love some of us more than others. In the parable, the landowner returns to the marketplace again and again and again, inviting people to come into the vineyard. Through Christ, God seeks us again and again and again and calls us into relationship. For it is only as we accept the invitation to come into the vineyard with Christ, that we can begin to share in the healing and reconciling work of the kingdom. This work is not a means to an end. It is an end, in and of itself. It is itself our participation in salvation and abundant life now. And it doesn't matter when when we were invited to become part of God's vineyard. Or, how much work we've done. Or, how many people follow behind us. Or, how we measure up to others. What matters is that early or late, we get to be in relationship with God. We get to work side-by-side with Christ, in doing God's caring, loving, reconciling work in the world. And when we jockey for position or negotiate for rewards, we entirely miss the point. Do you get it? Everyone in the parable was paid a denarius. A denarius was a wage sufficient for that day's need. In other words, no matter what they contributed, everyone was given what they needed. Those who came into the vineyard early and those who came in the middle of the day and those who came at the end of the day, they all received not what they deserved but what they needed. And in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus didn't ask, what do they deserve? But, what do they need? And then, he offered himself up to be a Savior sufficient for all the world. When we eat the bread and drink from the cup in the Holy Eucharist, God does not ask whether we deserve to receive this gift of God's own Son. God does not ask whether we should receive only a small portion of salvation. The body and blood of Christ are poured out for us in full measure. No matter whether we've known the joy of working in God's kingdom most of our lives or whether we've just accepted the invitation. The fullness of God's love in Jesus Christ is poured out as a reward for all of us. And it is sufficient for our need. Thanks be to God. (footsteps walking slowly) (coughing loudly)

- The Lord be with you.

- And also with you.

- Let us pray. Generous God of the first and the last, the greatest and the least. We come before you on this fine fall morning to pray on behalf of all people who have labored in your vineyards. For those who work hard and for those who cannot work as hard as they'd like. And for those who do not choose to work as hard as they should. Lord, in your mercy. (congregation reciting prayer) Teaching Savior, life's lessons are difficult to discern. Often, we differ in our abilities to understand. And our experiences of living, frequently bring us to a variety of conclusions about what is true and where justice is served. As we approach another presidential election, as we face another year of living together in community here at Duke University. As we consider our places, brothers and sisters in the family of God. We pray for that much needed common ground upon which we can walk. Teach us, Lord, how to value our differences while at the same time, treasuring our unity. Instruct us, Jesus, in the things that will bring us all to live in peace. Lord, in your mercy. (congregation reciting prayer) Spirit of healing, you know better than we do, the suffering of this world. From the physical world of threatened plants and endangered animals. To the human world of fragile hearts, imperfect bodies and troubled minds. Come, Holy Spirit, come. Visit all that is afflicted and hurting. And when possible, show us how we can join you to bring healing and hope to your creation and your creatures who are in pain. We pray especially for all who are still recovering from Hurricane Fran's devastation. And most especially, for those in the Kinston area who have endured yet another round of tornadoes and flooding. Lord, in your mercy. (congregation reciting prayer) Generous God of the first and the last, the greatest and the least. Thank you that whether we are the first or the last, the greatest or the least or somewhere in between. We all have a place to work in your vineyard. Grant to us a generous spirit, God. And sustain us with your love. Then, when others join us in our labor, we will not be found complaining and jealous. But, joyful for the extra hands and glad for the new companionship and better equipped to do the work of your kingdom in this world. Lord, in your mercy. (congregation reciting prayer) Amen. I invite you to pass the peace of Christ to one another. (congregation rising from their seats) You may be seated. You know the love of our Savior. That, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor that we might be made rich. Let's bring to God the gifts of our life and our labor. Let us worship God with our tithes and our offerings. (coughing loudly) (dramatic organ music) (choir singing with dramatic organ music) (dramatic organ music) (slow dramatic organ music) (congregation singing with organ music)

- The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Lift up your hearts.

Congregation: We lift them up to the Lord.

- Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Congregation: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

- It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our Sovereign God and spoke to us through the prophets. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn. (dramatic organ music) ♪ Holy, holy, holy Lord ♪ ♪ God of power and might ♪ ♪ Heaven and earth are full of your glory ♪ ♪ Hosanna in the highest ♪ ♪ Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord ♪ ♪ Hosanna ♪ ♪ In ♪ ♪ The highest ♪

- Holy are you and blessed is your Son, Jesus Christ. Your Spirit anointed Him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind. To set at liberty those who are oppressed and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people. He healed the sick, fed the hungry and ate with sinners. By the baptism of His suffering, death and resurrection, you gave birth to you Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. When the Lord ascended, He promised to be with us always, in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit. On the night in which He gave Himself up for us, He took bread, gave thanks to you, gave it to His disciples and said, take, eat, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And when the supper was over, He took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to His disciples and said, drink from this, all of you. For this is the blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. And so, in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith. ♪ Christ has died ♪ ♪ Christ is risen ♪ ♪ Christ will come again ♪

- Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by His blood. By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at His heavenly banquet through your Son, Jesus Christ. With the Holy Spirit and your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and forever. ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (dramatic organ music)

- And now, with the confidence of the children of God, let us 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 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. When we break the bread, is it not a means of sharing in the body of Christ? When we drink from the cup, is it not a means of sharing in the blood of Christ which cleanses us from sin and makes us whole? The body of Christ given for you. The blood of Christ shed for you. (mumbles) Won't you come to the Lord's table? (footsteps slowly walking) (coughing loudly) (footsteps slowly walking) (coughing loudly) (footsteps slowly walking) (slow organ music) (choir singing gently) (slow organ music) (choir singing gently) (footsteps walking slowly and organ music) (footsteps walking slowly) (choir singing gently) (slow organ music)

(coughing loudly) (footsteps walking slowly) (coughing loudly) (footsteps walking slowly) (coughing loudly)
♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Come to me and never be hungry ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪
♪ Trust in me and you will not thirst ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Come to me and never be hungry
♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Trust in me and you will not thirst ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup
♪ ♪ Come to me and never be hungry ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Trust in me and you will not
thirst ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Come to me and never be hungry ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink
this cup ♪ ♪ Trust in me and you will not thirst ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Come to me and never
be hungry ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Trust in me and you will not thirst ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪
Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Come to me and never be hungry ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Trust in me and
you will not thirst ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Come to me and never be hungry ♪ ♪ Eat this bread
♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Trust in me and you will not thirst ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Come to me
and never be hungry ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Trust in me and you will not thirst ♪ ♪ Eat this
bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Come to me and never be hungry ♪ ♪ Eat this bread ♪ ♪ Drink this cup ♪ ♪ Trust in
me and you will not thirst ♪

- Please rise. Gracious God, you have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service. We give ourselves to you and ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom. May our love be your love, reaching out into the life of the world through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen. (dramatic organ music) (congregation and choir singing with organ music) (dramatic organ music)

- Now, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you and keep you. (footsteps walking slowly) (choir singing gently) (dramatic organ music)