

(classical organ music)

- Grace and peace to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and welcome to this service of worship here at Duke University Chapel on this fourth Sunday after Epiphany. Our preacher for today's service is the Reverend Debra Brazzel, acting Dean of the Chapel and Director of Religious Life. Our preacher for next Sunday's service will be David Hollar, a Trinity College junior. David was chosen as this year's student preacher through a campus-wide competition. We look forward to his message. Please note the announcements as they are printed in your bulletins. And now please stand for the greeting. The Lord has brought us from bondage. (congregation responding) Therefore let us praise the name of the Lord. (congregation responding) ("Holy, Holy, Holy" introduction on organ) ♪ Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty ♪ ♪ Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee ♪ ♪ Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty ♪ ♪ God in three persons, blessed Trinity ♪ ♪ Holy, holy, holy, all the saints adore Thee ♪ ♪ Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea ♪ ♪ Cherubim and Seraphim falling down before Thee ♪ ♪ Which wert and art and evermore shall be ♪ ♪ Holy, holy, holy, though the darkness hide Thee ♪ ♪ Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see ♪ ♪ Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee ♪ ♪ Perfect in power, in love, and purity ♪ (organ interlude) ♪ Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty ♪ ♪ All Thy works shall praise Thy Name ♪ ♪ In earth, and sky, and sea ♪ ♪ Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty ♪ ♪ God in three persons, blessed Trinity ♪ All glorious God, we enter your sanctuary singing laud and honor to you name, yet as your prophet has told us, we are mindful that only humble seekers of righteousness are welcome on your holy mountain. We recognize that to worship a God of justice we ourselves must be a just people, authentic in our desire to be transformed. Help us to overcome our folly that we might find what is truly wise; to overcome our weakness that we might see what is truly powerful; to overcome our sin that we might discover what is genuinely good. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the light of the world, amen. You may be seated. 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, amen. A reading from the prophet, Micah. Hear what the Lord says, arise, plead your case before the mountains and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the Lord and you, enduring foundations of the earth, for the Lord has a controversy with his people and he will contend with Israel. Oh my people, what have I done to you and what have I wearied you? Answer me for I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage and I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam. Oh my people, remember what Balak, King of Moab devised and Balaam, son of Beor answered him and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal that you may know the saving acts of the Lord. With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you what is good and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. A reading from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of

God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart. Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided through the foolishness of our proclamation to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. Consider your own call, brothers and sisters, not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are so that no one might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus who became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption in order that, as it is written, let the one who boast boast in the Lord. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

- This morning's Psalm is Psalm 15, found on page 747 of your hymnal. Please stand and sing the Psalm and glory responsively. (organ introduction) ♪ Oh Lord, who shall abide in your tent ♪ ♪ Who shall dwell in your holy hill ♪ ♪ The one who walks with integrity, and works righteousness ♪ ♪ And speaks truth in his heart ♪ ♪ Who does not slander with the tongue ♪ ♪ And does no evil to a friend ♪ ♪ Nor takes up a reproach against a neighbor ♪ ♪ In whose eyes a reprobate is despised ♪ ♪ But who honors those who fear the Lord ♪ ♪ Who does not put out money at interest ♪ ♪ And does he take a bribe against the innocent ♪ ♪ The one who does these things will never be moved ♪ ♪ All glory be to your, Creator ♪ ♪ And to Jesus Christ the Savior ♪ ♪ And to the Holy Spirit, blessed Trinity ♪ ♪ As it was as time began ♪ ♪ Is now and will be forevermore ♪ Please be seated.

- Our gospel lesson is from the book of Matthew, chapter five, beginning with verse one. In this passage, Jesus went up the mountain. Now the mountain was the traditional symbol of the place for divine revelation. It is the holy mountain. This is what follows. When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain and after he sat down his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak and taught them saying, blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. (organ introduction to choral music) ♪ Oh Lord, remember us when Thou comest into Thy kingdom ♪ ♪ Thy kingdom ♪ ♪ Blessed are the poor in spirit ♪ ♪ For theirs is the kingdom of heaven ♪ ♪ Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted ♪ ♪ Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit ♪ ♪ The kingdom of heaven ♪ ♪ Blessed are they which doth hunger and thirst ♪ ♪ After righteousness for they shall be filled ♪ ♪ Blessed are the merciful ♪ ♪ For they shall obtain mercy ♪ ♪ Blessed are the pure in heart ♪ ♪ For they shall see God ♪ ♪ Blessed are the

peacemakers ♪ ♪ For they shall be called the children of God ♪ ♪ Blessed are they which are persecuted ♪ ♪ For righteousness sake ♪ ♪ For theirs is the kingdom of heaven ♪ ♪ Blessed are ye when men shall revile you ♪ ♪ And persecute you ♪ ♪ And shall say all manner of evil against you falsely ♪ ♪ For my sake ♪ ♪ Rejoice, rejoice and be exceeding glad ♪ ♪ For great is your reward in heaven ♪

In her book, "Gospel Medicine", Barbara Brown Taylor says that she thinks Jesus should have asked the crowd to stand on their heads when he taught them the Beatitudes because that's what he was doing. He was turning the known world upside down. Because we've heard them so many times we're at risk of not really hearing the Beatitudes. Their bite has been dulled by their familiarity. The crocheted plaque on the bathroom wall reads like a sweet platitude, quaint but perhaps a bit trite. Their shock value has been lost so maybe we need to hear them again, not sitting complacently, reciting the familiar lines as they're read but standing on our heads, looking at the world from a new perspective. Seeing as if for the first time, upside down. Where what we thought was on top wound up on the bottom and what was on the bottom is now on top. We need to listen to the Beatitudes standing on our heads because like a favorite story that we've heard countless times before, the surprise has worn off. We know what to expect and what the outcome will be. See, I can tell it's the advantage of this height in this pulpit, you can see a long way and I can tell that you're ready to lean back, relax. Another sermon on the Beatitudes. Nice, but harmless. Beatitudes were also familiar in Jesus' day. It was a common formula for wisdom sayings. Something like what we might find in a fortune cookie or on the calendar. They were everyday sayings about the good life, listing the virtues that anyone would be pleased to have. Blessed are the wise, for they shall not be fooled. Blessed are the strong for their enemies fear them. Blessed are the wealthy for they shall never go hungry. Blessed are those who have invested well for their old age shall be secure. As Jesus began teaching the crowd of disciples on the mountain, the first three words out of his mouth would have tipped his audience off about what was to follow. Blessed are the, people would have settled back to listen to the familiar wisdom sayings about how to get along and prosper in a hostile world. Unlike us, they would have been surprised at what he said. Shocked at the vision of the good life that he portrayed. Unnerved by the virtues that he extolled. Blessed are the meek, the mournful, the poor in spirit. Rejoice and be glad when you're persecuted. Who would want to emulate these virtues? Everyone knows that you can't get ahead in life by being meek and certainly poverty of body or spirit is to be avoided, not sought. What a contradiction. Blessed are the mournful. Or as another translation puts it, happy are the sad. Be glad when you're persecuted? Ridiculous. As Taylor says, no one with a lick of common sense would vote for any of these definitions of the good life. But Jesus didn't ask for anyone's approval. He just redefined the good life in nine short sentences. He held them out for everyone to see. Nine portraits of kingdom people previously known as victims, dreamers, pushovers and fools. These are the chosen ones, he said, the blessed ones who shall see God face to face. These are the happy ones, the lucky ones, the one who shall be satisfied. Not because they got an advance copy of the rules and played them to win, but because winning was the farthest thing from their minds. It comes down to what vision of blessedness you believe. What portrait of the good life you strive for. And if we are honest about the vision and the values that we live by, most of us would have to admit that the Beatitudes are just as foreign to us, just as shocking, as they were the day that Jesus spoke them and turned the world upside down. Let's talk about Beatitudes. The portrait of the good life in our age. These are the unspoken values and assumptions that we have about life that determine what we strive for and what we use to measure the quality of blessedness, happiness or good fortune in our own lives. These might include things like blessed are the rich for wealth and possessions bring security, independence and a comfortable life. Blessed are those who are

happy and carefree for they shall not be dragged down by anxiety or sadness. Blessed are the powerful for they shall win and come out on top. Blessed are those who buy our product for their hunger and thirst shall be satisfied. Blessed are those who show no mercy for no one will take advantage of them. Blessed are those who know how to compromise for they shall succeed no matter which way the wind blows. Blessed are the strong for they shall defeat their enemies. Blessed are those who know how to be silent for they shall avoid trouble. And blessed are those with a good reputation for others will not speak badly of them. Does it sound familiar? These are some of the values that our culture promotes and that common sense affirms. Most of us live by this wisdom in our right side up world. A world where only the strong survive and winning is everything. A world where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. A world where self-sufficiency and independence are so valued that we've forgotten who to be a community. A world where entertainment and escapism is fast becoming our largest export. A world where violence, suspicion and fear of other reign. A world where we've learned to barricade ourselves behind locked doors and arm ourselves for battle. Humanity has been pursuing these practical values for millennia and we've created one hell of a mess. In the Beatitudes, Jesus invites us to stand on our heads. He turns the world upside down and confronts us with another vision of reality. He challenges us to see that the values and goals of the world and those of God's reign are diametrically opposed to one another. He invites us to nothing less than a new way of life. You see, upside down you begin to see that the poor in spirit don't glorify poverty or being dispirited but acknowledge their absolute dependence upon God for their life and livelihood. You begin to understand that those who mourn are not the perpetually depressed but those who act compassionately to relieve the suffering and injustice of the world. Upside down you begin to see that the meek walk gently on the earth, harming none of God's creation or God's creatures. And that those who hunger and thirst for God have not a void to be filled but an appetite to be envied. Upside down you begin to see that the merciful are just handing out what they've already received. And that the pure of heart have just never gotten the hang of barricading themselves behind locked doors. Upside down you begin to see that the peacemakers are not impractical idealists but physicians prescribing God's own tranquility. Upside down you begin to see that those who've been bruised for their faith are not the sad ones but the happy ones because they found something worth being bruised for. Upside down you begin to get a glimpse of what God's kingdom looks like. And upside down it's easier to recognize the blessed ones who embody the kingdom way for they give us a glimpse of the good life that Jesus said was possible for you and for me. But sometimes the distance between the values of the right side up world that we know so well and the values of the upside down kingdom of heaven revealed in the Beatitudes seems too great for us to bridge and it is. But yet it is possible for us to become the blessed for the Beatitudes weren't given as law but gospel. We aren't dependent upon our own efforts to be meek enough and mournful enough and merciful enough to become blessed. There's no imperative in this passage, do this and you will receive this, do that and you will receive that. The language of the Beatitudes is descriptive. This is who these people are now and this is what the future holds for them. Before Jesus finished this sermon, he would tell the gathered crowd that all they needed to do was strive first for the kingdom of God and God's righteousness and that all these other things would be added to them. You see, blessedness is a gift of God's grace. God desires to bless us. God desires to make us kingdom people. But we have to desire God first and above all else before God can begin to reorder our priorities and reshape our character for blessedness is the natural expression of our relationship with God. As we love God more then we will value and love the people and things that God loves more and our lives will begin to embody this love. It might start out with one experience of mercy that leads you to greater and

greater depths of mercy. Like Dr. Paul Farmer who won the Humanitarian Service Award this year. His experience while he was in school at Duke with the Catholic Student Center in Haiti, showed the suffering of the Haitian people to him and it changed his life. He came back and changed his career from a focus on learning surgery and becoming a surgeon to infectious diseases. And then once he graduated it changed his career and he now spends 50% of his time working with the Haitian people. But it didn't start out that way. It was a little step, it was a little thing, an act of mercy that changed him and reshaped his life and transformed him. Or it might happen to you like it did to Jason and Caroline Burnhart, whose experiences in local and foreign mission projects while they were students led them to accept the challenge of organizing and running an orphanage in Bolivia when they graduated. Or like Sister Helen Prejean, whose conviction that killing was wrong led her to advocate for death row inmates while at the same time ministering to the families of their victims. Or any one of the countless kingdom people who find that their desire to serve God leads them to stand on their head and turn their world upside down so that they begin to see possibilities for hope and wholeness where before there was only despair and brokenness. The world looks funny upside down but maybe that is just how lit looks when you've got your feet planted in heaven. Jesus did it all the time and seemed to think that we could do it also. So blessed are those who stand on their heads for they shall see the world as God sees it. They shall also find themselves in good company, turned upside down by the only one who really knows which way is up. (organ introduction to choral music) (choir singing hymn)

- You may be seated. The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Let us pray. Gracious God, we bow before you, painfully aware of our individual longings and unmet needs. Some of us doubt our own worth and attempt to fill an inner void with possessions and activities. Others among us have fooled ourselves with pious pretensions and false pride. Some are bewildered and afraid while others are overly confident of their superior status and achievements. In the face of these false identities you present us with a Savior who embodies wisdom, righteousness and redemption and calls us to follow him. Hear now our fervent prayers that you may transform us into a people able to receive the abundance of your blessings. Oh Creator of the universe, you have shown us that happy are the poor in spirit as you came to earth to live among us. Help us to know that apart from you we have nothing. Save us from the pride that mistakes your gifts for our possessions. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Heavenly King, you have taught us happy are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. As you triumphed over evil and death on the cross we pray for hope that strengthens us in the face of grief, pain and despair. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Dayspring from on high, you have taught us, happy are the gentle for they shall inherit the earth. Restrain our arrogance that tempts us to place ourselves above others. Teach us how to become more like children that we may receive the gift of your grace as a blessing and not as a right. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Bread of Heaven, you taught us happy are those who hunger and thirst for what is right for they shall be satisfied. While you overturned rules of human making you lived your law in perfect love. Stir up in us a desire for justice, forgive us our careless living. Help us, the church, to be able to discern what is right as we struggle to resolve conflicts within the community of faith over abortion, homosexuality, capital punishment, or any other divisive issue. Empower us to live according to your justice. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Lamb of God, you said happy are the pure in heart for they shall

see God. As you lived a life of pure love, which revealed the face of God, teach us the way of selfless living, deliver us from prideful hearts, grant us the desire to love and serve you above all others. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Savior of the world, you said happy are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God. As you broke down walls of hate which separate us, enable us to be reconciled one to another. Forgive us the discord, prejudice, gossip and fear which we spread among our neighbors. Call forth peacemakers among the warring factions around the globe that your peace might reign throughout the earth. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Fountain of Hope, you said happy are those who are persecuted in the cause of right for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. As you took the cross upon yourself for our sakes, help us to risk ourselves for the right. Give us anger without hate and courage to obey your call at all cost. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Joy of the Soul, you said happy are you when people persecute you and speak all kinds of evil against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad for your reward will be great in heaven. Give us the will to live by your commandments, oh God. Empower us to be faithful witnesses to Jesus Christ our Lord that his light might shine for all the world to see. We ask no reward other than to know you and to serve you faithfully all our days. In the name of Christ our Lord, we pray, amen. As a forgiven and reconciled people, let us offer our gifts and ourselves unto God. (classical organ music) ♪ Praise ye the name of the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise ye the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise ye the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise ye the name of the Lord ♪ ♪ All praise God ♪ ♪ All praise our God ♪ ♪ For he is God ♪ ♪ For he is the God ♪ ♪ Above him, above him ♪ ♪ Our great God ♪ ♪ Praise God all in His temple ♪ ♪ Praise God all in His temple ♪ ♪ Praise God, adore Him ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ ♪ All-le-lu-ia ♪ ♪ All-le-lu-ia ♪ ♪ All-le-lu-ia ♪ ♪ All-le-lu-ia ♪ ♪ All-le-lu-ia ♪ (organ introduction to hymn) ♪ Praise God from whom all blessings flow ♪ ♪ Praise God, all creatures here below ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Praise God, ye heavenly hosts ♪ ♪ Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪ All good gifts around us come from you, oh God, as you have so richly blessed us, so we humbly offer these gifts in thanksgiving for your abundant mercy toward us and pray your blessing upon them. Use them to proclaim the gospel message to any who are in need. And may praise, glory, honor and thanksgiving descend upon your holy name, now and forever. These things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ who taught us to pray with confidence. 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, the power and the glory forever, amen. ("Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" organ introduction) ♪ Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee ♪ ♪ God of glory, Lord of love ♪ ♪ Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee ♪ ♪ Opening to the sun above ♪ ♪ Melt the clouds of sin and sadness ♪ ♪ Drive the dark of doubt away ♪ ♪ Giver of immortal gladness ♪ ♪ Fill us with the light of day ♪ ♪ All thy works with joy surround Thee ♪ ♪ Earth and heaven reflect thy rays ♪ ♪ Stars and angels sing around Thee, ♪ ♪ Center of unbroken praise ♪ ♪ Field and forest, vale and mountain ♪ ♪ Flowery meadow, flashing sea ♪ ♪ Chanting bird and flowing fountain ♪ ♪ Call us to rejoice in Thee ♪ ♪ Thou art giving and forgiving ♪ ♪ Ever blessing, ever blest ♪ ♪ Well-spring of the joy of living ♪ ♪ Ocean depth of happy rest ♪ ♪ Thou our Father, Christ our brother ♪ ♪ All who live in love are Thine ♪ ♪ Teach us how to love each other ♪ ♪ Fill us with the joy divine ♪ ♪ Mortals, join the mighty chorus ♪ ♪ Which the morning stars began ♪ ♪ Love divine is reigning ov'r us ♪ ♪ Binding all within its span ♪ ♪ Ever singing, march we onward ♪ ♪ Victors in the midst of strife ♪ ♪ Joyful music leads us sunward ♪ ♪ In the triumph song of life ♪ (organ finale to hymn) And now go forth in peace and be of good courage. Hold fast that which is good, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. And may the blessings of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always, amen. ♪ God be in

my head ♪ ♪ And in my understanding ♪ ♪ God be in mine eyes ♪ ♪ And in my looking ♪ ♪ God be in my mouth
♪ ♪ And in my speaking ♪ ♪ God be in my heart ♪ ♪ And in my thinking ♪ ♪ God be at mine end ♪ ♪ And in my
departing ♪ (classical organ music)