

(choir singing faintly) (gentle music) (choir singing faintly)

- Beloved let us unite our hearts in prayer to all mighty God. Our heavenly father, who of your infinite love to all men gave your son to be born, to live among us and to endure the cross that we might not perish forever. We now stop everything to bless the name of Jesus. Bless it be his glorious name that he is today alive forevermore, let the choirs of heaven and earth rejoice and let the trumpet of salvation sound forth the coming of so greatest savior, let the earth rejoice made radiant by so greatest splendor and let every voice make it known that the world's darkness is scattered. May thy church everywhere celebrate adorned with the brightness of so great alight and let this chapel resound with the adoring voices of those who have been redeemed unto God by his blood. But our father, our hearts are humble. As we remember our sins in comparison with what we have to rejoice about our transgressions are ever before us. We ask you to take them away, take away our slowness to believe the good news of advent, our tendency to believe that other things are more practical than the gospel our tendency to think that advent is mainly Christmas trees, not mainly hope for those who live in the ghetto, our tendency to think of advent in terms of reindeer, rather than in terms of ending the war in Vietnam, we have refused oh God in our sophistication to believe that a child in a manger who had no academic degrees could bring wisdom into our world. Indeed, we have trusted too much in our degrees. Our academic proprieties, our published works. We have not taken seriously enough. The call of him who was born among the cattle forgive this sin, oh God. And in restoring us by your grace, give us faith to believe the message which comes to us from on high at this season. Amen. In the gospel according to Matthew 1:20-21, we find these words, which are so appropriate to us. Now, "Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying thou son of David fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife for that, which is conceived in her is of the holy spirit. And she shall bear a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sin." Let it be. Because we have received so much from so many. And because we are blessed especially by Jesus Christ. May we bring together our hearts and voices for our prayer of thanksgiving. Let us pray. All praise and thanksgiving be unto you Oh God merciful father for you have given us sows to know and love you and you care for the life you have given. And remember what things we need glory be to you that when by our sins, we were lost and ruined. You sent your only son into the world to redeem our life from destruction and to create us and new onto life everlasting. Praise and thanks be unto you that you have shed abroad in our hearts the holy spirit who helps our infirmities and makes intercession for us, according to the will of God merciful father let no and thankfulness or on the worthiness of ours, the privates of these your unmerited blessings, but continue your mercy toward us and guard us from stumbling that finally we may be presented before the presence of your glory faultless and with exceeding joy through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (gentle music) (choir singing faintly)

- I've seen a great light. Those who dwelt in the land of deep darkness on them has light shined. Thou has multiplied the nation. Thou has to increased its joy. They rejoice before thy, as with joy at the harvest as men rejoice, when they divide the spoil for the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his

oppressor thou has broken on the day as with midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult. And every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born to us. A son is given and the government will be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end upon the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore, the zeal of the Lord of hosts we'll do this. May God add his blessing to the reading of his holy word. (gentle music) (choir singing faintly)

- The Lord be with you.

- And also with you. Let us pray. All mighty God, our heavenly father. We come with our prayers for our world, for our fellows, for ourselves, asking that you will give to our strife torn world of today and news birth of the spirit of the prince of peace. May those who had not thought peace to be possible gain a fresh hope, give a new conscience to those who have tried to justify great wrongs by claiming to be merely following orders and doing the inevitable. We remember, especially your sons and daughters in India and Pakistan in Ireland and Vietnam, Laos, Palestine, and Egypt so many places where there is strife and where there needs to be hope that love can reconcile. And so may he who came to earth first as a little child come now as more than a child as the Lord of the nations, the mighty God, the prince of peace grant unto us grace to make straight in the desert of our barren hearts, a highway for our God, we pray you, oh God, to send the holy comforter to those who are bereaved. Those who feel beyond the reach of hope, may the spirit, which comes from the gospel at this time of the year, begin to soften those who are hard of heart, may power be given to the tempted. Send love the love of the great position to those who now are in pain and made trust and strength and companionship be given to those who face and uncertain illness give patients and perspective to all of us as we seek day by day to meet our own times of testing. Holy God as we remember the advent of your son into a humble family, we intercede for the homes in every nation or all the mothers who cradle their infants. We're all hungry children, all illegitimate or unwanted sons and daughters, or the innocent who suffered the consequences of the wrongdoing of others. Grant us the grace to desire you with our whole hearts. That's so desiring we may seek and find you. And so finding you may love you and loving you may hate those sins from which you seek to redeem us, open our minds to the councils of the eternal wisdom and let our hunger and thirst be for righteousness that we may be filled with the bread of heaven grant us grace to seek first your kingdom, and then the faith to believe that you will add unto us all things that are needful. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Now, before we pray together the Lord's prayer, I would like to share some thoughts with you about this special day in the chapel. We have called this Messiah Sunday, partly because our dear friend, Dr. Stewart Henry, who is preaching this morning has agreed to let his sermon be an interpretation of the Messiah. Partly because some of the special music in our service comes from the Messiah cheaply because this is the weekend when the great rendition by the choir and orchestra is given of Handels magnificent oratorio. This afternoon at four o'clock. The last of the three presentations will be given. I acknowledge that all of the tickets for seats in the chapel this afternoon are gone. However, those of you who do not have tickets and who wish to come, are invited to do so, as long as you know that you will not get one of the best seats in all probability and that it is barely possible you might not get a seat at all, but if you come at 10 minutes until four you probably will be admitted to the chapel, those who heard the Messiah yesterday at firm that it is worth standing the entire time to hear it. As you

know, the walls of the chapel since last December have been coated with an acrylic sealant, making it possible to hear the choir and the orchestra as never before. So that literally it is true that it will be better this year than ever before. If for that reason only there are other reasons. So I encourage you to come along with me and try to find a seat even if you do not have a ticket, you will be welcomed and it will be worth it. Now may we be in our hearts as sincere as Jesus was when he gave us the words which we use Sunday after Sunday through 1900 years in prayer saying. Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come I 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.

- And the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. In mid 18th century London, the city was already the most populous one on the globe and then acquired new inhabitants daily, diplomats and derelicts, philosophers and fools among others, gravitated to the metropolis in such numbers that the city was distinguished quite as much by the astonishing variety and contrast of human life which she sheltered as by the growth which she boasted, but English man at that time, whatever their station or a sturdy locked, often violent and always hardy and seemingly able to survive anything but death they surged along the noisy cobblestone streets, violet and saints together, jostling each other along London's ill lighted ways as they went about their several errands Whether hurrying to the entertainment of a public hanging, or bound for a meeting of parliament and all breed the heavy air that was sitting with the fires of a thousand cold hearts and malodorous with the refuge from the gutters. Now in due course, there are arrived in England one whom the conglomerate population of London eventually came to know and mostly to love George Frederick Handel though he was both foreigner and musician. London made a place for him in her earthy heart. And it was no more than right for in an age of many gifted artist, he was distinguished by achievements and his genius raised him above the literalness of those ridiculous episodes of his early life, which had made his name sometime a subject of gossip and often an object of amusement in the days before the city had accurately taken the measurement of the lumbering German from Holland, although Handel tried hard to be an Englishman he never really succeeded. He did indeed after petitioning parliament become a subject of the crown and British years accepted him, but it was a concession for all about he learned to swear in English he could never do so without an accent. And it was impossible to understand his (speaks faintly), unless one knew four languages. What Handel achieved however, was more substantial than the sincere flattery of successful imitation. It was not for nothing that when the old man died and was buried in Westminster Abbey, there assembled Saturn observer, the greatest concourse of people of all ranks ever seen upon such or indeed any other occasion London had long since forgiven him, his parents, his gross corpulence, his almost hot bearing. In his old age, he moved with a certain majesty, which was odd considering his bowed legs and his heavy gate, nor was it the Scarlet gray coat that he wore now, the gold headed cane, but he carried, which gave him the unmistakable air of grandeur. It seemed rather to be an earned right which was his by virtue of the memory of a vision and the knowledge of a faith. He was tranquil in this world because he was oriented to the next. Londoners had appreciated the circumstance, but slowly with characteristic perversity, not of the times are at the place, but simply of the way word human heart, London was tardy and remarking the greatness of the Messiah it maybe you think of Handel it once and even only as the composer of the great oratorio, no matter in a world of competition that is praised or not by Handel whose work in buck is equal almost to that of Bach and Beethoven combined.

And which includes among other compositions, 46 operas did not explore the oratorio fully until he was middle of age, nor right. The Messiah until he was 56. And when he did produce the Messiah, it was by no means spontaneously and universally, according the masterpiece status which it now enjoys when London first took notice of Handel, it was for petty reasons. And for the years that she remembered him, he had bought a public deal. He had produced the fashionable opera. He had presided successfully over the big ring squabble and bravo Prima Donnas. It was only later, much, much later that London discovered that she could not forget the Messiah. Although she did forget much about the composer and let him die alone. Now, London at first rejected the sacred oratorio self-consciously and conventionally religious folk were already apprehensive because Handel had shown an unfortunate tendency, not only to deal with scriptural subjects in his compositions, but to do so in a way, which they did not consider a proper presenting sacred material in the music halls. Sometime earlier Handel had composed music for a mask, which dealt with the exciting Old Testament story of Haman and Mordecai. Of course it was after all about the Jews. So there might have been some excuse for it, but even so the performers wore costumes and there was scenery and so it scandalized the Christians Old Testament or no putting a Bible story on the stage, played by common Mummers, but came texts for church sermons up and down the town. "What are we coming to?" demand that one (speaks faintly). When the will of sight, Mr.B imposed upon us in this fashion Handel always mixed with the last set or another, by which of course he meant actressy women and uncertain man. And now we are the critic. He has become their slave, but the bomb exploded when it was discovered that Handel intended to repeat the presentation of Haman and Mordecai and to use the children of the choir of the chapel Royal in the production. Well, Dr. Gibson, the Bishop of London put a stop to that. He forbid the children to perform. So Handel almost accidentally turned to refining the oratorio form a device without offending costumes or movement or scenery. Nevertheless, the apprehension or occasion to by Haman and Mordecai was mild compared to the shock which attended the intelligence that Handel had composed a piece to be called Messiah, to put that word Messiah on a play bell. It was surely madness. No one list of all the man himself can save what actually happened to Handel during the time he composed the Messiah. Amazingly, it was a work of 24 days. He did not leave his house. No, very often his room, a man servant who brought him food on returning generally found the trays untouched and Handel staring in the vacancy are now and again, weeping without shame. And once confessing that he had seen all happy and the great God himself. Poor Handel, he needed and heavenly reassurance since 1741, the public always pick on now make war upon him, Handel all been in and out the favor of his beloved London was being shamefully used. According to his enemies, his career was now beyond all hope. The Preston mind, body and the state, he began work on his greatest composition. Now it is the function of a Messiah to come to those whose need is sorest and futile no doubt for a Messiah to appeal to others. But if it is the Messiah's role to speak to the hopeless, it is the genius of the true Messiah, but he can make himself heard. He compels the prisoner the captive, the forsaken, but have no other hope. They hazard nothing. Those who are free need no deliverance. My whole do not know how to long for healing. The very opening words of the Messiah announced, and the music underscores the desire of the human heart. Comfort you, comfort you. They are reassuring words and genuine for Handel spoke the word that he himself longed to hear beyond the hope himself he addressed hopeless man with authenticity because he knew the agony of the human heart and despair. London was a long time hearing. Perhaps it was parklet that although the word was for London, it was not for her alone Handel where elders know better and surely not worse than ours, but as it was a world of teaming humanity, it was of course, a world of frustration and desire for all the bravado and the

complacency of the 18th century. Handel times were after all light hours, Smollett complained that London had become in some ways more desperate and Savage than since mankind were civilized and Horace Walpole reported that one had to travel at noon even as if he were going to bathroom. How familiar yet? The real despair of Englishman of Handel's day lay where despair has always festered where then the human heart, not to Londoners alone, but to every man's heart Handel saying his song of comfort the actual words, of course he did not write at all no more did the librettist. They were from the Bible gems called from a dozen books, elevated from a context sometimes tedious and placed together so that they invite and thrill and warn and reassure instinctively Handel knew just when the setting should be muted and just where the melody must (speaking faintly) or repeated again and again, with amen and amen and reflection of the soul acknowledgement. But if you read the libretto of Handel's Messiah. There is no systematic statement of doctrine rather what one find just a credo. It is a confession of faith yet it is, as it were hearing words with which we are familiar in such a way that having long known what they say, we know now for the first time, what they mean, the words are all from the Bible, London notwithstanding her wilderness was less contemptuous of the tradition than we, and probably knew many of the words, what they said that his. Handel alerted them to what the words meant. And so it was to some as if they had never heard them before it is ever thus with truth ever thus where the Messiah Jesus often said to his disciples, "You have heard it said, but I say unto you." and then proceeded to astonish them with his insight yet the power of what he said, lay not in its novelty, but in his obvious identification with what he said, he preached what he practiced. He was his message. Men were moved, not because he spoke of law, but because he was love and thus a Messiah, it is just this kind of unexpected truth that leaps out of the melody and the meaning of the oratorio sprung from the despair of one beyond hope it speaks to helpless man. And it punched to that, which is itself beyond hope, which transcends every dream and every aspiration that modern man might have it points to that which we have not imagined because it is beyond anything we dare hope for hearing it, really hearing it is like standing in the presence of one who is dying. And because he is unafraid of death, suddenly knowing for the first time, the meaning of life, the prisoner hopes for freedom and the Messiah brings not only deliverance, but victory as well. The wounded longs for healing and the Messiah brings this and more, much more He brings life. The damned seeks forgiveness, but the Messiah offers purity. So desperate man find fulfillment beyond all hope in the person of the Messiah, but ask for stones and he gives them bread. This is ridiculous. Such wild promises well enough for children in the nursery or old ladies with anything. But for us, for you, for me here is the outrageous fate offered to those lost in the Hills of Greece, that they shall stand in a dazzling light that in the land of shadow that will come splendor and love and peace. Now it's outrageous, but it is the nature of faith to be outrageous no, do not turn away. Even if the outrageous one can make a reasonable observation consider before he died, Handel lost his sight, operated on unsuccessfully by the same possession who performed surgery on box eyes and with no happier resolved Handel spent his last days and that special loneliness, which only the blind suffer. By now he had been many times in and out of public favor. Since that season, almost a generation earlier when he had composed the Messiah, London had not wanted it ban religious controversy kept many away the storm about performing a work of this nature and the Playhouse blasted for years. The clergy called the oratorio, (speaks faintly) religion Handel, a heretic and few had understood what the composer had attempted. Dublin accepted the peace, true, but only for special reasons. Yet in the years, between the time it was first presented, the day of his death, London had come, if not to understand what Handel it seen at least to grant that there had been a vision that his experience was genuine and that he gave this sit here, no ordinary

offering. The Messiah was not performed annually and Handel always up a philanthropist between bankruptcy's regularly gave the proceeds to our worthy cars, a hospital for the foundlings, comfort for prisoners. After the old man site was gone he still conducted attendance would lead him to the podium and there he would be transformed scarcely two weeks before his death he conducted the Messiah for the last time. And when it was over, he was very tired. His friends either did not notice or would not admit the gravity of his condition, "10 concerts and little over a month". They said, at his age 74, really the old veterans should have learned a lesson. And then they spoke of moderation. But Handel for half death that was on the 6th of April and he did not last a fortnight. And the antrum like a rudderless boat drifting towards shore yet unable to stay or to guard his course, he lay almost motionless staring with cyclists eyes at the ceiling attended only by those who stepped he recognized whose bias he knew. He wished he said to die on good Friday. As a matter of record, it was Easter Eve when he breathed his last. So it is no small matter to relinquish life. He was completely trying to call in his last hour, as continually since he had written the Messiah, he testified step straight to a way laying light, even as the oratorio itself underlies this confession. The essence of all that is song in the Messiah is this I know that my Redeemer liveth now translate it into your own words. I know that there is meaning for my life lying even beyond my dearest hope. not I know, but I know, I, myself, I resonate to the music. I have indeed not as Handel seen all heaven itself and the great God, not I, but being beyond hope, I have known that redemption comes must come and can only come from beyond hope. Why he is much of a theology of hope in these days. And hope is good, but the apostle Paul wisely and rightly places faith before hope, hope may nurture faith, but it does not give it birth. It happens the other way around and the symbols of this blessing season promise that there is that which one there's not hope for that is Christmas must be more than candlelight and sparkle, more than (speaks faintly). The Messiah makes this plane. It is authentic because it speaks up more than shepherds in the fields here is bad for him, but here is our soul Calvary and beyond there is that for which a man dare even hope. The assurance that the power, which has blessed us with Bethlehem can conquer Calvary. The wisdom that the manger has no meaning without the cross and the dark mystery that this may be true is canceled by the bright wonder that it is and you God bless and pity you, it may be that you find yourself without hope. I do not know. I cannot look into another's heart, but I know my own. And as we are all brothers, you and I old and young, we are all of us desolate and beyond hope unless, unless the witness of the Messiah springs from just such helplessness. And it seems of that, which lies beyond all hope, which every man, any man, you may know if we hazard the lead amen and amen. Oh my God, wonderful counselor, everlasting father, prince of peace and lighten our eyes with the understanding of faith that we might know and acknowledge that in thee and thee alone, we live and to move and how I'll be. Amen. (gentle music) ( choir singing faintly)

- All mighty God. We pray that the spirit of the Christ child may not only purify the priestly sons of Levi, but all Layman as well, that all of us together may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. A righteousness, which comes by having been cleansed by his spirit so that whether we stand here at this altar and offer our money, or whether we are in our rooms, in the classrooms, or wherever we may be, an offering of our lives may be made in righteousness. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all (gentle music) (choir singing faintly)