

(light organ music) (singing in foreign language) (light choral music) ♪ A shield that never fails us ♪ ♪ Protection from these troubles ♪ ♪ Let he that hath protect us ♪ (light choral music) ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Let songs of joy break forth ♪ ♪ Let songs of joy break forth ♪ ♪ Sing alleluia, praise his name forevermore ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Let songs of joy break forth ♪ ♪ Let songs of joy break forth ♪ ♪ Sing alleluia ♪ ♪ Praise his name forevermore ♪ ♪ Shout, sing, and dance, and celebrate ♪ ♪ And dance and celebrate ♪ ♪ Praise his name ♪ ♪ Shout, sing, and dance, and celebrate ♪ ♪ Dance and celebrate ♪ ♪ Rejoice, let all within us praise his name forevermore ♪ ♪ Shout, sing ♪ ♪ Let songs of joy break forth ♪ ♪ Let songs of joy break forth ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Let songs of joy break forth ♪ ♪ Let songs of joy break forth ♪ ♪ Sing alleluia ♪ ♪ Praise his name forevermore ♪ ♪ Shout, sing ♪ ♪ Let songs of joy break forth ♪ ♪ Sing for joy ♪ ♪ Sing for joy ♪ ♪ Oh praise his name forevermore ♪ (singing in foreign language) ("Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel") (energetic organ music)

- Prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Let us honestly confess before God the things that we have done or failed to do which have made us less effective servants. Oh God, you who love us always, we confess that in the thoughts of our minds, in the desires of our hearts, in the words of our lips, and in the deeds we have done, we have sinned against you. We acknowledge also our sins of omission and negligence, the duties we have shirked, the opportunities we have missed, the words of encouragement and witness we have not spoken, the deeds of helpfulness and love we have not performed. We are truly sorry for always we have not pleased you. Have mercy upon us and forgive us our sins as we try to forgive those who have sinned against us. Cleanse our hearts and so strengthen us by your Holy Spirit that we may now walk in newness of life through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen. Oh Savior of the world, who by your cross and precious blood redeemed us, save us and help us we humbly beseech you oh Lord. Oh lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Oh lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, grant us your peace. Oh lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, receive our prayer, amen. Let us give thanks for God is good and God's love is everlasting. Thanks be to God whose love creates us. Thanks be to God whose mercy redeems us. Thanks be to God whose bread sustains us. We welcome each of you to our first Sunday in Advent worship service here at Duke University Chapel this morning. We are glad to have you with us to worship in this very special season of the year. You will be pleased to know that after the service today, meditations on the Advent season will be available for your use. They have been prepared for our own personal meditation by members of the faith and arts committee and the worship committees jointly of Duke University Parish Ministry. These booklets will be available in the front as you leave the church. And members of those committees will be distributing them to you we commend them and know that they will enrich your lives during this season ahead. We would like to also mention that there is a special Advent art exhibit entitled the Many Faces of Mary, an exhibit of Madonna Christmas cards, which is now on display in the Duke art museum in the east campus. This will be a special opportunity for you to see the portrait of Mary portrayed through the ages. And we highly recommend this to you. We have a special guest in our service of worship today. Mr. Michael Anderson is here to celebrate his 22nd birthday. We welcome him and extend to him the special joys of the Christmas season that are in our

hearts and before us. He and the youth of the Boy-town United Methodist Church from Boy-town Virginia have traveled all the way here today as a group to help celebrate this special birthday. Welcome to each one of you and especially to Michael. Let us pray. Oh Lord our God who by the entrance of your word gives light unto the soul, pour down upon us the spirit of wisdom and understanding, that being taught by you in holy scripture, we may receive with faith the words of eternal life and be made wise unto salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen. The Old Testament lesson is from Isaiah 2:1-5. The word which Isaiah, the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be raised above the hills. And all the nations shall flow to it. And many people shall come and say, come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways, and that we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law. And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations and shall decide for many peoples. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war anymore. Oh house of Jacob, come let us walk in the light of the Lord. Here ends the reading of the Old Testament, amen. The epistle lesson is from Romans 13:11-14. Besides this, you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone. The day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires. Here ends the reading from the epistle lesson, amen. (lively organ music) ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Unto God's Almighty Son ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Unto God's Almighty Son ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ye bright angelic choirs in joy ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ye bright angelic choirs ♪ ♪ With holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ With holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ With holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ The Lord be praised ♪

♪ Songs of joy ♪ ♪ The Lord be praised ♪

♪ Songs of joy ♪ ♪ And songs of joy ♪

♪ And songs of joy ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Ye bright angelic choirs with holy songs of joy ♪

♪ Praise the Lord ye bright angelic choirs ♪ ♪ In holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord in holy songs of joy ♪ ♪

Man, proclaim his grace and glory ♪ ♪ His grace and glory, His grace and glory ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪

♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪

♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah unto God's Almighty Son ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord in songs of joy ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord in

songs of joy ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord in holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ Man, proclaim his grace and glory ♪ ♪ His grace and glory ♪

♪ His grace and glory ♪ ♪ His grace and glory ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪

♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ God's Almighty Son ♪

♪ Almighty Son ♪ ♪ God's Almighty Son ♪

♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah unto God's Almighty Son ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord

♪ ♪ In holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ Holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ In

holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ In holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord in holy songs, in holy songs ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord in

songs of joy ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ In holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ In holy songs of joy ♪

- Will the congregation please stand for the reading of the gospel? The gospel lesson is from Matthew 24:36-

44. But of that day and hour, no one knows. Not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark. And they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away. So will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field. One is taken and one is left. Two women will be grinding at the mill. One is taken and one is left. Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Here ends the reading from the gospel lesson, amen. (lively organ music)

- We are pleased to have you here this morning on this first Sunday of Advent, and pleased particularly to have Mr. Kraig McBroom and the members of the Northern High School choir here to share with us in this very special service of worship. They have led us before and we welcome you back again and pray God's blessings on you, not only as you worship and lead us today, but in the days to come as you sing for your own pleasure and to the glory of God. Let us pray. Now may the words of my lips and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your site oh Lord, our strength and our redeemer, amen. Ever since I was a little boy, I have heard people in the church talk about the fact that the night is far gone. Or that the Lord is coming soon. Or talk about the second coming of Christ or the return of the Lord Jesus. Or the new advent of Christ. Or about Christ coming again in his glory, or about the Lord coming again on the clouds. The night has been far gone and the day has been at hand as long as I can remember. And long before that, and way before that even. I have heard about end things, last things the telos, the eschaton, about the end of time all of my life. I have heard and have been afraid. But if good is right, and holy is best, if just is the order and peace is the ethos, if oneness is the way, and if rightness or righteousness is the lifestyle, if destruction is over and goodwill prevails, if hell is ended and the kingdom has come, if swords are turned into plowshares, and spears into pruning hooks, if as Revelation tells us there is to be no more mourning, or crying, nor pain, if as the spiritual tells us, we ain't gonna study war no more, if we are gonna lay down our swords and shields, if as the other spiritual tells us, all God's children gonna put on shoes, we're gonna put on shoes and walk all over God's heaven, if the time has come for us to cast off darkness, and if it is full time for us to wake up from sleep, if salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed, if the night is far gone and the day is at hand, then why be afraid? Why fear? Why should I be uneasy, or scared, or worried, or nervous, or anxious because the night is far gone? Or because you do not know what day the Lord is coming. Or because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Or because of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son. Only the Father knows. Why have I been afraid? Why am I afraid? Well I remember one hot summer afternoon when I was about seven or eight and I had been to a neighbor's house. And all the folks who happened to be there that afternoon were talking about the second coming, about the Lord's return, and about Christ coming to judge us all. And I headed home. And about that time it started to storm. And thunder and lightning flashed and sounded all around. And the wind and the rain blew. And I thought the Lord was on his way. And it scared me to death. That may be why I'm still afraid of thunder and lightning. I'm afraid the Lord's gonna be on one of those bolts of lightning. Why have I been afraid? My infantile, juvenile, immature, non-understanding, self-centered desire to live and grow, and have my own way, to live out my life according to my plans, and my desires, to want my way and not God's way,

for me and mine, and us, and ours, and for our world, and the coming of Christ, God's coming again in Christ's second Advent would surely mess up all of that. Why can we not? Why do we not really, truly, honestly pray rather than just say the words? Why do we not really honestly pray, thy kingdom come Lord, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven? That's all Paul and Jesus are talking about. That's all. That's all. And that is right. That is holy. That is life. And that is God's way. The word is saying to us what one of the great prayers of the church is saying. Eternal God, who commits to us the swift and solemn trust of life, since we know not what a day may bring forth, but only that the hour for serving thee is always present, may we wake to the instant claims of thy holy will, not waiting for tomorrow, but yielding to today. God is simply calling us to live. The word is speaking to all those who refuse to accept life as it is simply because it wasn't always this way. And it need not be this way. Whatever this way is for you, it need not be this way forever. For us individually or for us all over the world. God is simply calling us to choose life, to live, not to wait, or waste, or tarry, or linger, or put off, or delay, or postpone, or neglect, or ignore the magnanimous and the majestic claim or invitation one moment longer. Life, as James Kavanaugh puts it in his little book, Celebrate The Sun, life is learned from suffering and joy, love and friendship. Life is learned from living. Now watch. Be ready. The night is far gone and the day is at hand. If we are to have our fears and anxieties, if you have any at all about this, if we are to have our fears and anxieties relieved about any of these matters, we must understand, I believe, the theological, biblical, and personal meanings of the word-symbols night and day. If the night is far gone really means what I think it means, then the darkness and the fearsomeness of night are almost gone. Symbolically the word is saying then that the evil of life is almost over. The heaviness and emptiness of spirit are near their end. That the sin of the soul, the destructiveness of the demonic, the savageness of Satan, the power and pull, and influence of evil, are now far gone. Is this not what the night which is far gone means? If the day is at hand means what I think it means, then the hope and the promise, and the fulfillment of God's love are also near at hand. Symbolically I believe, the word is saying that the day of peace for all, the time when the lion and the lamb will lie down side by side, the time when justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream, the time when none of God's children, pray God, none of God's children will want, when there will be bread, and water, and food for body and for spirit for all, the time when the water of life which flows from that tree of life brings to all of us the healing of the nations, is this not the day which is at hand? Paul writes, the night is far gone. The day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. All of this raises for me a question. Namely, why is there such a great preponderance of writings like this in scripture? Is this God's way to win and woo you and me and all other children of God? In the Old Testament, in the New Testament, in the Gospels, in Paul's writings, in Revelation, teachings and parables, and stories and writings like this stream forth from the word of God, why? Is this the only way, by fear? Is this the only way to get people to follow the way? If so, it hasn't worked has it? I think there is a preponderance of literature like this in the word because the night is always far gone, and the day is always at hand for all of us all the time. The night is far gone. It was for those who were around Jesus. Mary and Joseph, who understood not who Jesus was. Simeon whose eyes had seen the glory of the Lord when they looked upon Jesus. For John the Baptist, not worthy even to tie the sandals of his Lord. The night was far gone for Peter's mother-in-law who lay dying. For Nicodemus who chose to come to Jesus by night. For Zacchaeus, so eager to find life that he climbed a tree and then took Jesus home with him. For the hemophiliac woman who wanted simply to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. The night was far gone for the whore who was accused by the crowd on the beach. For the woman who insisted on washing Jesus' feet with her ointment and drying his feet with

the hair of her head. The night is far gone for Judas. For those who slept while Jesus prayed. For Caiaphas and Pilate. For Peter on that fateful Friday morning. For the crowd who would not release Jesus. For one thief. For a second thief. For John at the foot of the cross. For Mary at the cross. The night is always far gone for Jesus, and for those around Jesus, and for us. The day is at hand for Mary. My soul, she cried, my soul doth magnify the Lord. For Simeon, mine eyes have seen thy salvation. Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace. For Peter, thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. The day was at hand for Zacchaeus, for Jesus said after he went home with him, surely salvation has come to your house this day. For the centurion at the foot of the cross, surely this man was the Son of God. For Mary, the Lord is risen. For the two strangers on the road, did not our hearts burn within us? For Thomas who touched the wound in Jesus' side and said, my Lord and my God? The night is far gone. The day is at hand, always, for all of us, all the time. For I believe we're like John. We really are always looking for the one who is to come. And if this he or she is not the one, we ask like John the Baptist, are we to look for another? Are we really? The night is far gone. The day is at hand. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ. You know it's the buts and the therefores in scripture that really do us in. We hear a simple statement, or we hear a simple story, and it sounds simple and easy. And then, but, go ye and do likewise. Or therefore. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ. The first time I read these words and studied them in the interpreters Bible, I wrote in the margins several years ago what does that mean? What does it mean to put on the Lord Jesus Christ? Well I didn't know years ago when I wrote that in the margin, and I'm not so sure that I know even now. We use words often in preaching and teaching, and in talking about the Christian faith that sound good but we don't always know or understand what we mean when we say them. What does it mean to say put on the Lord Jesus Christ? I'm still not sure, but it may mean something like this. Be gentle as he was. Be faithful as he was. Be kind. Be human. Be tough and firm in the face of authorities. Be strong to condemn evil, and injustice, and oppression as he was. Be compassionate, compassionate toward all. Be obedient, obedient to God as Jesus was. Be humble, unassuming, unpretentious. Be prayerful. Pray in the morning, in the night, with a crowd, all alone, on the mountains, when you go away by yourself. Stand with those who have no one else to stand with them. Walk with those who, if you were not walking with them, would walk all by themselves. Cry with those who grieve. Drink and rejoice with those who celebrate. Be loving. Be loving. Be loving again. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. That my friends is the day which is at hand. And you and I can be as Jesus was. We can know that day. For Christ has come and Christ has come to make us who we are intended to be. As a matter of fact, as Carlyle Marney once said, you already are who you wish you were in Christ. You already are who you wish you were in Christ. I don't really know how to say put on the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't even know how to do it myself. But if I were going to suggest a thing or two, let me suggest this. I believe it means to surrender yourself and ask for the presence of Christ to become real in your life. Ask for it. And as I say these words, there's a part of me that kind of recoils because this all sounds so simple and childish. But I really don't know any other words to use than to say, as Paul did, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Or to say, ask, seek, knock. Ask and ye shall receive. Knock and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to you. Seek and ye shall find. And pray. Pray in whatever words you use. And if there's a little voice inside you that is there, I think as the inheritance of generations of unfaith that most of us have grown up around. If a little voice inside of you cries out and says, but I don't believe, I don't believe, don't worry too much. Let's just keep on and on. Lord I believe, help my unbelief, may be the best we can ever say. But the beauty of it is that that's enough. Seek and you will find. This presence of Christ, of God's love to heal, to give peace, and at last something like real life will come. And then you and I my friends can get up and live. But we must seek first.

And to pray is the way. We must work at it. It's like playing a new game as a child. We have to learn as we go because prayer for many of us is so foreign. It is so very, very hard. And yet it is so very easy. And everything in life and in death, in this life and in the life to come, everything I believe depends on that. Seek, ask, knock, pray, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. And by God's grace we will find. In Christ's name and with Christ's power I promise you just that. My guess is most of you have seen the poster quoting Camus, the existentialist French philosopher playwright. In the midst of winter, I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer. In the midst of winter, I finally learned that in me there is an invincible summer. The night is far gone. The day is at hand. Darkness has become light. The night has become day through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us pray. Oh Lord Jesus Christ, help us not to fall in love with the night that covers us. But help us through the darkness to watch for you as well as to long for you. Help us to dream and to hunger in the dark for the light of your presence and your love. Help us to know that the gift of new life, new light, can be ours if we truly surrender ourselves, if we open ourselves to you. Help us to surrender to you oh Christ. Help us so that by words and deeds of love we may bear your grace to a world that is stuck in the dark of night and knows not that the day of your mercy is at hand. Help us oh Christ, amen. (energetic organ music)

- Let us affirm what we believe.

Congregation: We believe in God who has created and is creating, who has come in the truly human Jesus to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit. We trust God who calls us to be the church, to celebrate life and its fullness, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus crucified and risen, our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

- The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And with your spirit.

- Let us pray. Our Lord Jesus the Christ, thou Son of the Most High, Prince of Peace, come and be born again into our world this day. Wherever there is war in the world, wherever there is pain, wherever there is loneliness, wherever there is devastation, where there is no hope, come oh long-expected one with healing in your wings. Oh holy child whom the shepherds and the kings and beasts adored, come and be born again. Wherever there is boredom, wherever there is fear of failure, wherever there is temptation too strong to resist, wherever there is bitterness of heart, come oh blessed one with healing in your wings. Oh Savior of the world, be born in each of us who raises his face to your face not knowing fully who we are, or who you are. Knowing only that your love is beyond our knowing and that no other has the power to make us whole. Come Lord Jesus to each who longs for you even though we have forgotten your name. With your love, seek us oh Lord, and find us that we may find ourselves and our places in your kingdom. With your light, awaken us oh Lord, and give us a vision to seek out neglected tasks and the desire to accomplish them. With your truth, guide us oh Lord, as we pilgrimage toward the real meaning of Christmas this year. And may we find it through Jesus Christ our Lord who came and lived among us and taught us to pray saying, 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. (light organ music) (singing in foreign language) (light organ music) (lively organ music)
Receive these our gifts oh Lord from your people who long await the coming and the living in your kingdom.
Receive these gifts to be used for your kingdom in this world. In Christ's name we pray, amen. (energetic
organ and choral music) May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may
abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪
♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (lively organ music) (congregation buzzing)