

- Sunday worship service, June 8th, 1980. Duke Chapel. (slow organ music fading in) (organ playing loud) (organ music playing quietly) (ethereal organ music) (choir singing) (organ playing)

- In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen. Since we are assembled here to hear God's word and call upon him in prayer, let us think of our unworthiness. Confess before God that we have sinned and fought. Word and deed. And realize also, that we can not free ourselves from our sinful nature, therefore, let us take refuge in his infinite mercy seeking and imploring God's grace for the sake of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Almighty God, you love us but we have not loved you. You call but we have not listened. We walk away from neighbors in need, wrapped up in our own concerns. We have gone along with evil, with prejudice, warfare, and greed. Oh Lord, our God, help us to face up to ourselves so that as you move toward us in mercy, we may repent, turn to you, and receive forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord. As you believe so shall it be. By the command of our Lord, Jesus Christ, I announce to all of you the forgiveness of your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. May the God of peace sanctify you holy, and may your spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless 'til the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ. God who calls you his faithful, and he will do it. Let us give thanks for God is good and God's love is everlasting. Thanks be to God, who's love has made us. Thanks be to God, who's mercy forgives us. Thanks be to God, who's promise secures us. Amen. I would like to welcome each and every one of you. This morning, this Lord's day, as we come together, to pray and to lift our voices to our God. I would also like to call attention to the fact that this afternoon at 5:30 in the gardens, there will be a free concert where the music of Johann Strauss will be presented. Once again, it is at 5:30 in the Sarah P. Duke Gardens and it is a free concert. We hope that as many of you can will be in attendance. Let us pray. Prepare our hearts, oh Lord, to accept your word. Silence in us any voice but your own. That hearing, we may also obey your will. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen. The old testament lesson for today is from the first book of the Kings, chapter 17, verses 17 through 24. After this, the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe, that there was no breath left in him. And the woman said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!" And he said to her, "Give me your son." And Elijah took him from her bosom and carried him up into his own chamber where he lodged, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried to the Lord, "O Lord my God, has thou brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?" Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this child's soul come into him again." And the Lord harken to the voice of Elijah. And the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives." And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth." Here ends the reading from the old testament. (organ music quietly playing) (ethereal opera singing) ♪ Oh taste and see ♪ ♪ How gracious the Lord is ♪ ♪ Blessed ♪ ♪ is the man ♪ ♪ That trust-eth in him ♪ ♪ Oh taste and see ♪ ♪ How gracious the Lord is ♪ ♪ Blessed ♪ ♪ is the man ♪ ♪ That trust-eth in him ♪ (men singing and echoing woman) (woman singing opera) ♪ Blessed is the man ♪ ♪ That trust-eth in him ♪ (choir singing opera) Will the

congregation please stand for the reading of the gospel lesson. The gospel lesson is from Saint Luke, chapter seven, verses 11 through 17. Soon afterward, he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a large crowd from the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." And he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And Jesus said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" And this report concerning him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country. Here ends the reading of the gospel. (organ playing slow song) (congregation singing along)

- The bible knows the deepest sadness of the human experience. It knows the speechless tears that flow in response to life's capricious malice. Today's lessons speak of two widows. We do not know the circumstances of their widowhood. Was one or the other left alone after a long and tender marriage? Or did death strike to frustrate a relationship just beginning? The widowed then and now, can testify that regardless of the length of years. Death always comes in the midst of life. But whatever the sorrow or that first loss of a husband's companionship, the pain is multiplied with the subsequent death of a child. There is an extravagance of agony in both lessons. As if to highlight the miracle of life that overcomes it. The widow of the first lesson, who lived in a village called Zarephath was a pagan, beyond the concern of the community of Israel, a fact that dramatizes the sovereign freedom of the love of God, a love that will not be constrained or retained behind the barriers we build. The widow of Nain lived in an obscure part of Galilee outside the mainstream of Jewish life. Those who were with Jesus when he encountered her would have been familiar with the story of Elijah and the earlier widow, and the meeting of their master with the widow of Nain, would have triggered their memories of the power of God to breathe life into being, in each episode, there's a dramatic response to a specific sorrow, to the suffering of one who doesn't count for much. To the special agony of the bereft. Faith begins there. With that identity, with the acknowledgment of the darkness at the heart of life. With the sense of dependency, with compassion. The word literally means suffering with another. Faith begins, in Christian terms, at the foot of the cross. In the companionship of vulnerable love. But it does not end there. To identify faith as synonymous with sympathy, is really a subtle form of separating ourselves from those who suffer. To say that religious faith is only or even primarily expressed in a response to human need is to participate in the oppression of the poor because such an emphasis on sympathy makes a sharp difference between them, those who suffer, and the rest of us who are strong and distant from the sufferers. Faith does begin with compassion. It is a response to the pain and loss of human life that leads a believer to see the precariousness of his own life. To recognize human need. To identify with the losers and to stand with them as a sister or brother to share their suffering. But suffering and the stories of these two widows is a context, a stage, a setting for a more central theme. What the stories are about is gospel, good news, a pronouncement of the way things really are, and they say that the kingdom of God is here. They declare that God reigns, that is a given. And from it, flow these consequences. The desperate loneliness of a widow cut off from her only son, is not going to be the final chapter of her life. Life is stronger than death for those that can perceive it, the most devastating catastrophe has within it, echos, glimpses, possibilities that in the providence of God, reach their fullness in the life to which he is calling us. Faith that begins at the foot of the cross, in standing with the suffering, opens like a rose to receive life's glorious

multiplicity. Faith moves from compassion, to perception, to proclamation. From the deepest sadness, to the wonder of what God is doing in human life. From the darkness into the glory of unending light that reveals the purposes of God. These stories are revelatory episodes. They are like banners that speak boldly and clearly of the tenderness and of the power of God. The stories summon faith, they call it forth. And that happens whenever the word, the truth of God invades the distorter of human existence and quails the storms of chaos. Whenever the light overcomes the darkness of the world. The word invades that darkness and in the world is so illumined, men and women respond in faith. As if to say, "Aha, yes, that's the way it is." "I can see it now." "When I stand with the suffering, I see things in a new way." "I see possibilities and signals I did not see before." Elijah said to the widow at Zarephath, "See, your son lives." He summoned from her a new perception of the way things are and the young son of the widow on Nain was commanded by Jesus, "Young man, I say to you, arise." and the dead man sat up and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. What was lost is found, life is given anew by the command of the Lord of Life. And faith is the way to see all of this. It provides a new perception, a different way of looking at what is, finding in it what God is doing and praising God for the wonder of it all. Faith makes a difference. It makes all the difference. It is a foundation, a place to stand. Not for protection from life's tumults but for perception of life's gifts. Ours though, is a faithless age. Our generation looks at events and does not see what is happening, there's hardly any vision. We experience life, not as the context for meeting God, for deepening our sense for wonder and love and justice. But as a threat to what is familiar. A danger. Something unknown and therefore against us. Those who stand on a foundation of faith, who begin at the foot of the cross, see things differently. Men and women of faith in every event ask this question, "What does this event say to me of my world or of my God or of me?" "What response does it command?" Those who stand on the foundation of faith look for example at the eruption of Mount Saint Helens and see not the failure of modern science to predict it, but see the wonder of a world still in the process of formation. They hear the message that human beings are made to live in harmony with their sister's and brothers of creation, with rocks and hills and the forest and seas, and all the vast array that God has made. Those who stand on the foundation of faith, listen to the human explosion and a refugee camp in Arkansas or in the desperate streets of Miami. And hear the prophetic judgment that national and racial animosities erupt like volcanoes when justice is ignored or suppressed. Faith makes a difference, it begins with compassion and moves towards hope, hope divorced from compassion, becomes a mindless optimism. Compassion without the direction of hope is a sugary sympathy with no capacity, no passion for justice. Faith is the energy that unites compassion and hope. Does faith make a difference in your life? How do you look at what you do? At what happens to you. What messages are you ready to hear through the events of your life? What is God saying to you through them? About your world, yourself, and him. And what response will you make. Faith that begins at the foot of the cross in wonder at the love that sustains us there. Channels that love and compassion towards others and enters life with invincible hope. Such a faith is a rock. High above the confusion and noise of the landscape of despair and from it we can see clearly enough. There are clouds, to be sure. There will be uncertainty but the foundation is safe and the direction is clear for those who began in compassion and live their lives in hope for by faith they are aligned with the purposes of almighty God. Who's kingdom is surely coming on earth as it is in heaven, amen. (organ music playing)

- Let us affirm what we believe. We believe in God who has created and is creating. Who has come in a 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. Let us pray. Hear our prayer, oh Lord, for the church universal. That you will confirm it in the truth of your holy faith. Inspire it with unity and concord. And extend and prosper it throughout the world. We pray you for those who are called to be ministers in your church. That by their life and doctrine, they may set forth your true and living word among us. Especially do we call upon you for those who labor in the younger churches. That they may be strong and steadfast, abounding in your work. Bless, we pray you, oh Lord, all schools, hospitals, homes for the aged and all our institutions. Bless those who minister to human need, whether a body, mind, or spirit. And grant them wisdom, strength, and love for you and their fellow brothers and sisters. Let your blessing rest upon the seed time and the harvest. The commerce and industry, our leisure in rest. The arts and culture of our people. Take under your special protection those whose work is difficult or dangerous. And be with all who lay their hands to any useful task. Give to all people the mind of Christ and dispose of days in righteousness. Take from us all hatred and prejudice and whatever may hinder justice and love among the races. Oh God of all people, remember the nations of the world and let conquered and peace prevail among them. Remember those who rule over us and guide those people who influence our lives through radio, press, television. Remember our children, our youth, the married couples and those about to be married. The widows, and all those who are lonely, forsaken and despairing. Remember the sick, the suffering, the persecuted and the dying. Especially today do we remember the American hostages in Iran. And the many people left homeless from the disaster at Mount Saint Helens. And the tornadoes in the mid west. Send them your help, oh Lord, and strengthen them. We commemorate before you, oh God, your servant Doctor Julian Heart and your blessed apostles and martyrs and all the saints that have gone before us with a sign of faith and are at peace. We praise you for the mercy and blessings shown them in their lifetime and pray you to grant us a place in their fellowship and eternal life in your kingdom. Finally, oh Lord, we pray for ourselves and all who confess the name of Christ that we may show forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness, into his marvelous light. Grant that we who do now celebrate your light and love may at the last, be clothed in the radiance of your son. For into your hands, oh Lord, we commend all for whom we prayed, trusting in the mercy of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has taught us to pray. 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, for ever, amen. (organ playing, choir singing) (organ playing softly) (organ playing quick tune) (choir and congregation singing with organ)

- Receive the benediction. May the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord, Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good we work to do his will, working in you, that which is pleasing in his sight. And may the blessing of the almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be yours now and always, amen. (choir singing slow, ethereal melody) (organ playing intensely)