

(upbeat orchestral music)

Clergy Members: (speaking foreign language)

- Welcome to the Chapel, this Orientation Sunday. We have been summoned to worship by the Duke Chapel Choir. This is the first Sunday under our new Interim Director of Chapel Music, Professor Greg Fountain. We welcome Professor Fountain, who comes to us after a distinguished career at North Western University, and we look forward to his leadership this year and we're glad to have our choir back with us for the Fall. This is a special Sunday for us because we welcome our new students to Duke Chapel. We would ask everyone to fill out the form, which is in the bulletin. Tear it out, drop it in the offering plate, if you would like to participate in the many, one of the many areas of the Chapel's ministry. And after the service today, we will have lemonade in front of the Chapel and all are invited to our time of fellowship and refreshment. And as our custom, the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, is offered immediately after every service, in Memorial Chapel. We're glad that you're here. It's the beginning of a new year. Let us continue our worship. (strong organ music) (congregation singing hymn)

- Let us pray. Lord of all power and might, the author, and giver of all good things, graft in our hearts, the love of Your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and bring forth in us the fruit of good works. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever, Amen.

- Let us pray. Open our hearts and minds, O God, by the power of your Holy Spirit, so that as the Word is read and proclaimed, we might hear with joy, what You say to us this day, Amen. The Epistle lesson is taken from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness, in the Heavenly places. Therefore, take the whole Armor of God, that you may be able to withstand, in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the Breastplate of Righteousness, and having shod your feet with the Equipment of the Gospel of Peace. Besides all these, taking the Shield of Faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication, to that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the Saints, and also for me, that utterance may be given me, in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. This ends the reading of the Epistle.

- The reading from the Psalter is number 599, in the back of your Hymnal. Please stand. I give thee thanks, O

Lord, with my whole heart. (audience responding)

- I bow down toward thy Holy Temple and give thanks to thy name, for thy steadfast love and thy faithfulness. (audience responding)

- On the day I called, Thou didst answer me. (audience responding)

- All the kings of the Earth, shall praise Thee, O Lord. (audience responding)

- And they shall sing of the ways of the Lord. (audience responding)

- For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly. (audience responding)

- Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou dost preserve my life. (audience responding)

- The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me. (audience responding) (strong organ music) (congregation singing hymn)

- The Gospel is taken from Mark. Now when the Pharisees gather together to Him, with some of the Scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his Disciples ate with hands defiled, that is, unwashed. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands, observing tradition of the Elders. And when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat, unless they purify themselves, and there are many other traditions, which they observe. The washing of cups and pots, and vessels of bronze. And the Pharisees and the Scribes asked Him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the Elders, but eat with hands defiled?" And He said to him, well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, this people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. You leave the Commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men. And he called the people to him again, and said to them, hear me all of you and understand, there is nothing outside a man, which by going into him, can defile him, but the things which come out of a man, are what defile him. This ends the reading of the Gospel. (strong organ music) (choir singing)

- Today's Epistle is not one of my favorite Biblical texts. I'm sorry if it's yours. I've always had trouble with military descriptions of the Christian life. Be strong in the Lord. Put on the whole armor of God. Taking the Shield of Faith, the Helmet of Salvation, the Sword of the Spirit. This mixing of the marshal with the Gospel is dangerous. You know that some of the darkest days of Church history occurred when Christians marched forth with banners unfurled and swords drawn, to Crusade and to fight. My Church, the United Methodist, recently had an unholy rawl over whether or not to include the hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers," in the New Methodist Hymnal. Many people said it was too militaristic. I don't particularly care for the hymn, but I don't particularly care for, "Battle Hymn of the Republic," for the same reasons, which of course, some of your great grandfathers sang as they were on the way down here to do in my great grandfather. (congregation laughing) What do these military images have to do with the religion of the Prince of Peace?

But to be truthful, I suppose my objection to these Christian marching songs, probably have less to do with Pacifist Theology, than they have to do with an experience that I had the summer of my Junior year in college. For it was that summer, that as part of my ROTC training, I spent that summer as the guest of the US Army at an exclusive camp for boys, called Fort Bragg. With the help of mosquitoes and gnats and Drill Sergeants, I, like Senator Quayle, decided that the best way to protect my country, was somewhere outside the US Army. I remember the day that I had to lead a platoon through an imaginary mine field. It was some sort of test of one's military leadership ability. Well, I must have missed class the day we studied how to go through a mine field. I didn't have the slightest idea what to do, so I told the platoon, let's all walk in a straight line with a positive mental attitude, (congregation laughing) and when we got to the other end of the mine field, I remember the Sergeant came up to me, and with a look of infinite contempt on his face, he said, well, Mr. Joe College, I hope you're happy. According to my calculation, you just lost 15 of your 20 men, coming through that mine field. I said to him, Sergeant, I'm not a professional military man myself, but in your informed opinion, would you say that was good or just average? (congregation laughing) What the Sergeant said to me can not be repeated. "Onward Christian Soldiers," Ephesians six, 10 through 20. These seem inadequate expressions of the Christian faith, and yet the writer, to the Ephesians, tells people to put on all this armor, as part of the Gospel of Peace. I wonder, perhaps today's Christians suffer from a diminishment of metaphor, in describing what it's like to be a Christian. Recently when asked, "What was their first association upon hearing, 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic?'" the majority of respondents did not think of war, but of the Civil Right's movement of the 1960s, and the fight for racial justice in this country, which perhaps reminds us, that there was a day when Christians had something worth fighting for. Perhaps we forget in a time of tamed churches and toned down preachers, that there was a time when we had to reach for a proper description of the Christian faith, even to reach into the area of military and fight and battle. What do you think when you hear that you are to put on the whole armor of God for we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, take the whole armor of God, the Breastplate of Righteousness, the Shield of Faith, the Sword of the Spirit? Is there anything worth fighting for? Or better still, because I remind you, the armament spoken of here is mostly of a defensive character, is there anything in your world so inimical to the way of Christ, that you need some sword or shield for protection? The writer to the Ephesians says he wrote these words in chains. Back then, they gave Christians a jail cell, rather than a TV show, and he told his congregation, if you plan to be a disciple of Jesus, you better get ready for a fight. Now, I wonder, if this Ephesians six, telling Christians to prepare for battle, I wonder, I wanna test this. I wonder if this means more to some of you, than to me because of the difference between our generations. I wonder. Because I was raised in a church, where the main agenda of the church was adaptation to the world as it is. But I suspect many of you, particularly those of you about the age of our freshmen, have grown up in a church where the main agenda of the church was not adaptation, but survival. How to survive as a Christian, and the armament spoken of here in Ephesians six, is mostly armament that you need to survive. You see, I was born into a world where Christians seemed secure, confident, powerful. I grew up in the United States of the 50s. My parents worried little about whether or not I would grow up as a Christian, after all it was the only game in town. The whole place closed down on Sundays. Everybody went to church. It was the accepted, normal, American thing to do. In that world, the church didn't have to bother itself too much about defensive maneuvers because we said, after all, we were lucky enough to be growing up in a Christian country. And it was our world. But a few years ago, I woke up and realized that, whether or not my parents

were justified in believing that, I met almost nobody who believes that today. And I think that's amazing. Almost no one, American Christians, Protestant or Catholic, conservative or liberal, no one that I meet believes anymore that you can grow up as a Christian by simply breathing the air and drinking the water, and being lucky enough to be raised in the right part of town. We're learning that if our children will grow up into this faith, we're going to have to make them that way. If we would hold to and live out this faith, we must do so with a new sense of care and intentionality, because sometime, sometime between 1950 and 1970, the world shifted on it's axis. It was no longer natural. It was no longer American to be Christian. My last congregation was in South Carolina and was next door to the Synagogue, and we owned the parking lot with 'em, and the Jews parked in the parking lot on Friday and then we parked in it on Saturday, and you only had to own half of a parking lot to get a whole parking lot. Anyway, the Rabbi and I would often get together on Monday morning for coffee. And one morning the Rabbi said to me, you know it's tough to be a Jew in Greenville. I said, well, I know with people like Bob Jones III, running around loose, if I were Jewish, I wouldn't sleep well either. He said we're always having to tell our children that behavior may be fine for everybody else, it's not fine for you. You're special. You're different. You're a Jew. You have a different story, you have a different set of values. Such language may be okay for everybody else in your neighborhood, but not for you, you're a Jew. I said, Rabbi, you're not gonna believe this, but right here in Bible Belt, Greenville, South Carolina, I heard very much that same conversation in a Young Couples Sunday School class, right here in my own church. Young couples having to tell their children, you know, those attitudes may be okay for the Joneses next door, but they are not okay for you, you are special, you are different, you are Christian. You see, my friend the Rabbi had always been a part of a faith community that knew that if it's children were going to grow up as believers, they would have to make them that way. A faith community that had not asked the surrounding culture for a bunch of crutches and props. I tell you, the day will come, when the church will once again more closely come to resemble the Synagogue in it's stance with the surrounding culture. Paganism, godlessness, is the air we breathe, the water we drink, it captures our young. It subverts and converts the church. The writer to the Ephesians did not have to be told that the world was an inhospitable place for belief. He wrote this letter in chains. His world recognized the subversive character of the Christian faith and put him in chains. Our world recognizes the subversive character of the Christian faith and it ignores us. The world has declared war upon the Gospel, in the most subtle of ways. Ways so subtle, that sometimes you don't know you've lost the battle until it's over. For example, a couple of years ago, it was Orientation Sunday, and I looked at the Biblical text assigned for the day and I looked at the Epistle lesson, and my heart sank, for it was Ephesians 5 Ephesians 5:21. Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ, wives obey your husbands. I thought I wouldn't touch that with a 10-foot pole. What an inappropriate text for a progressive, forward-thinking university Chapel. Nobody but some reactionary, like Jerry Falwell, would dare preach on a text like that. My associate would drag me out of the pulpit and puncture me with her spiked heels. I would never preach on that text. Be subject to one another. Wives be subject to your husbands. Well, I decided to do something unusual for Methodists. I decided to stick with the text, and I began my sermon by saying, look, look you hate this text, I know you hate this text. Nobody but Jerry Falwell, some reactionary, would like this text. What an ugly word, submission, submission, wives submit to your husbands. It's an ugly word because our word today is liberation. We have experienced a liberation of just about everybody. Liberation. What an ugly word, submission, and yet, we know that in the context of the day, this is not a conservative word, this is a radical word. In that day women had no rights, and the writer of Ephesians spends many more verses explaining to husbands their duties to wives, than the

writer expends talking about wives' duties to husbands. More so, scholars agree, this is not a passage about marriage, it is a passage about the church. The writer is urging, not the submission of women in marriage, but mutual submission to one another in the church. The tone is set by the opening verse, submit yourselves to one another out of reverence to Christ, and that is why you hate that text. Because our word is liberation, and the sooner that husbands can be liberated from wives and parents, liberated from children, individuals liberated from community, and we all can be liberated from God, then so much the better. I mean, why do you think you're at the University. You're here to become autonomous, self-sufficient, self-standing, lone, powerful individuals. And when you get outta here and got your degree, you won't need mama or daddy or your community or God or anybody. You'll be liberated. We call it education. And the writer of the Ephesians says, that's the way to death, not life. Now, I tell you that's odd. I have learned here in the University pulpit that the Gospel, in the oddest ways, brings about a head on collision with some of our culture's most widely held and deeply cherished values. Being a Christian is not natural nor easy. And so the writer to the Ephesians says, you better not go out unarmed. It's tough out there because the world lives by different slogans and different visions and speaks a different language. So, he says, you got to get together and speak the truth in love. You got to grow up in your faith. Weak, immature, childish faith is no match for the world. Being a Christian is too difficult to go alone. Last year I was talking to one of our students, who is a participant in one of the Bible study groups here on campus. Did you know, according to our calculation, we have about 50 such Bible study groups that meet every week, here at Duke? And I was asking him if he had ever been a part of a Bible study group before. And he said, no. And I said, why did you join a Bible study group now? And he looked at me and said, you've never tried to be a Sophomore and a Christian at the same time, have you? It's tough out there. Paganism is the air we breathe, the water we drink, and I'm not just talking about what they do in the dorms on Saturday nights, which is often Pagan. I'm talking about what they do in the classroom on Monday morning. You'd better not go out alone, without comrades in arms, without sword and shield. And so you have to gather, for worship. You have to speak about God in a world that tries to teach us to live as if there is no God. To speak to one another as brothers and sisters, in a world that would have us live as strangers. You have to pray to God to give you what you cannot earn on your own, in a world that tries to tell you you are self-sufficient and independent. In such a world, what you do here on Sunday morning, becomes a matter of life and death. Pray that I might speak that Gospel boldly. Couple a years ago, I was invited to preach in a congregation located in the heart of one of our cities. The congregation is made up entirely of black people, who live in that part of town, in the tenement houses, in that city. I arrived about a quarter of 11, and was the first car in the parking lot. The preacher didn't show up till about two minutes of 11. The choir was not there until 10 after. We weren't really started until about a quarter after 11. And we had about five hymns and three or four gospel songs, couple a anthems. Three offerings. A number of prayers. I didn't stand up to preach till about 12:40. We weren't outta church, the benediction wasn't said till 1:15. I was exhausted. When we finally stood out in the parking lot, I said to my friend, why do blacks stay in church so long? We can usually get it over with in about an hour. And he sort of laughed and looked at me and said, well, unemployment is running about 50% in this neighborhood. For our youth, it is much higher. And that means, when they go out those doors, everybody they see, everything they hear, will say to them you are nobody. You're nothing 'cause you don't have a good job and a big car. You're nothing. He said, so I get 'em in here on Sunday morning, and through the prayers and the hymns and the preaching and the clapping and the singing, I just try to say to them, that's a lie. You are royalty. You have been bought with a price and you are loved as God's own chosen

people. You are somebody. And he says, it takes me about two hours to get their heads straight. I'm glad that you're here this morning. May this be a time when you get your head straight. When you gain the equipment you need and you see the vision you deserve and learn to name the name that saves, because it's tough out there. (strong orchestral music) (congregation singing hymn)

- The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Let us pray. Almighty and merciful God. We give you thanks for your gift of the Holy Spirit, equipping your Saints with truth and righteousness and salvation, and all that we need to serve you faithfully. We praise you for the soldiers of Christ, who have opened your word to us, who have brought us into your presence, exhorted us when we were weak and have given us a vision of your good purpose for us. We thank you for brothers and sisters, who have dared to speak the name of Jesus at great risk to themselves. Give to your church, today, that same courage, we pray, that we may risk all for love of You and find all in Your love of us. Hear our prayers for those who, because of their faith in Jesus Christ, and loyalty to the Gospel, face discrimination or harassment, persecution, imprisonment and terrorism. Console them in their suffering, strengthen them for every challenge and guard them with confidence in the face of adversity. O God, You who are our helper and keeper, preserve those who contend with grave illness or injury, especially those who are patients in Duke Hospital. Restore them to wholeness, comfort them with a sense of your goodness, and guide those who minister to them in their needs. We ask for your leading, Heavenly Father, for those who begin a new semester of teaching and learning this week, that in humility of heart, they may ever look to You, who are the source of all wisdom. Give them joy in the knowledge of Your truth, and perseverance as they start new tasks. These things we ask, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, Amen. And now let us offer ourselves and our gifts to God. (gentle music) (soloist and choir singing) (bells chiming) (strong organ music) (congregation singing hymn)

- Eternal God, the source of all our comfort and joy, receive us and these our gifts as we dedicate them and ourselves anew to you. Consecrate for us, the experiences and resolves of this hour, and lead us in the way of true understanding and fruitful service through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray, saying,

All: 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 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. (strong organ music) (congregation singing hymn)

- Now may the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always, Amen. (bells chiming)

Clergy Members: (speaking foreign language) (strong orchestral music)