

(whimsical church organ music) (upbeat church organ music) (upbeat church organ music) (upbeat church organ music) (soft church organ music) (soft church organ music)

- Good morning, and welcome to Duke University chapel. We're glad you are with us today. Our preacher for this morning is the Reverend Dr. Gaylord Lehman, who comes to us from Rocky Mount, North Carolina. We welcome him here to the chapel and look forward to hearing him. We also this Sunday bid farewell to our summer choir that's been under the direction of Dr. Rodney Wynkoop, and we thank those who've so faithfully served in the summer choir throughout this summer. Next Sunday we will have a community choir and our preacher is the founder of Habitat for Humanity, Millard Fuller. If you're interested in the Habitat for Humanity walk or house raising that is to occur in Durham as part of his visit, brochures are located back on the attendance desk here in the chapel and we invited you to pick up one. And now let us continue our worship. (choir singing) (choir singing) (choir singing) (choir singing) (upbeat church organ music) (choir singing) (choir singing) (choir singing) (upbeat church organ music) (choir singing)

- Gracious God, whose son Jesus has become bread of our lives. Come to us in this hour of worship, and feed us. Feed us with your word, read and preached with your praise in music and song. Our hungers might be met and our deepest thirst quenched by your love. This we pray. Amen. Be seated.

- 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 first lesson is taken from the second book of Samuel. Then David, mustered the men who were with him, and sat over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. And the King ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the King gave orders to all the commanders about Absalom. And Absalom chanced to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding upon his mule. And the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak and his head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on. And a certain man saw it and told Joab, "Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak." And Joab said to the man who told him, "what? You saw him? Why then, did you not strike him there to the ground? I would've been glad to give you ten pieces of silver and a girdle." But the man said to Joab, "Even if I felt in my hand the weight of a thousand pieces of silver, I would not put forth my hand against the King's son. For in our hearing the King commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, for my sake, protect the young man Absalom. On the other hand, if I had dealt treacherously against his life and there is nothing hidden from the king, then you yourself would've stood aloof." Joab said "I will not waste time like this with you." And he took three darts in his hand and thrust them into the heart of Absalom while he was still alive in the oak. And ten young men, Joab's armor bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him and killed him. This ends the reading of the first lesson.

- Let us stand for the Psalm. Oh god, thou art my god I seek thee. (congregation replying) My flesh faints before thee. (congregation replying) So I have looked upon thee in the sanctuary. (congregation replying)

Because thy steadfast love is better than life. (congregation replying) So I will bless thee as long as I live. (congregation replying) My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat. (congregation replying) When I think of thee upon my bed. (congregation replying) For thou has been my help. (congregation replying) My soul clings to thee. (congregation replying) (church organ music) (choir singing) (choir singing)

- The second lesson is taken from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Therefore, putting away falsehood, let everyone speak truth with his neighbor. For we are members, one of another. Be angry, but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. And give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion. That it may impart grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the holy spirit of God, in whom you are sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you with all malice and be kind to one another. Tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God and Christ forgave you. Therefore, the imitators of God, as beloved children and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. This ends the reading of the second lesson. (choir singing a cappella) (choir singing a cappella) (choir singing a cappella) (choir singing a cappella) (choir singing a cappella) The gospel is taken from John. Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger. And he who believes in me shall never thirst." The Jews then murmured at him because he said, "I am the bread of life which came down from heaven." They said, "is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus answered them, "do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up at the last day it is written in the prophets and they shall all be taught by God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the father comes to me, not that anyone has seen the father, except him who is from God. He has seen the father. Truly truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven. That a man may eat of it, and not die. I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." This ends the reading of the gospel.

- The ad in the classified section said, "for sale, hot tub. Complete with plumbing. Will trade for pick-up truck. Call after 5 p.m." You don't have to have an advanced degree in clinical psychology to suspect that behind these words there lies a life in major transition. Away with the gold chains, the wine coolers, the avocado dip. In with the baseball cap, the Bud Light, and the flannel shirt. Out with public television, and in with The Nashville Network. Out with the teal and purple of Alexander Julian, and in with the red and white of the good old boys. Away with the hot tub, and in with the half ton. We live in a culture that is filled with all kinds of lifestyle changes. There are all kinds of searches and longings going on among us. Some people become vegetarians, others join the Nautilus. Some become computer literate, others fly hot air balloons. Some go into therapy, others join a bible study group. People are all the time making adjustments to the compass setting of their lives. These changes are not usually advertised in the classifieds. They are not as dramatic as trading hot tubs for half tons. Some of our adjustments are rather trivial and superficial. But very often they are the signs of a crucial and sometimes courageous search. Push the hold button on that for just a moment. And let me take you back to the gospel of John. The section of scripture that was just read.

Where for the last several Sundays in the lectionary lessons from the gospel we have been kneading the dough and shaping the loaf which speaks of Jesus as the bread of life. John had a split level communications system. He used a lot of words with double meaning. Bread, water, life, wine, birth. To John, Jesus' miracles were signs. They pointed beyond the physical reality to a life changing substance. For example, Jesus' mother wanted him to provide some additional wine for the wedding guests. Instead he produced an abundance that would've made Ernest and Julio Gallo proud. And he pointed beyond the wine, to the matter of believing. Nicodemus came to Jesus after hours. They discussed birth. But Jesus moved it beyond the maternity ward to talk about spiritual birth and re-birth. The Samaritan woman who too many hands had handled, and too many feet left trampled in the dust. She talked about drawing water from a well. While Jesus talked about living water. That Perrier of the spirit which ends all thirst. Mary and Martha had already taken all the dishes back to those that brought the food after their brother's death. But Jesus went well beyond resuscitating Lazarus, to offering resurrection and life for the whole world. Always a double meaning. Wine beyond wine. Birth beyond birth. Water beyond water. Life beyond life. And bread beyond bread. We who are Southern Baptists could live up to all of our negative billing with the feeding of the five thousand story. Nothing points up any better the way we can do battle over the Bible than the story of the loafs and the fish. Those who prefer their religion straight and literal would tell you that Jesus had a kind of magic basket from which he pulled loaf after loaf, like running copies off a Xerox machine. The more liberal among us would focus on the little boy's unselfishness. His willingness to share his Big Mac and his small fries. Which prompted others in the crowd to break out their lunches and to share them with their needy neighbors. And then in fascination with fast food production, we would emphasize the peripheral and we would miss the punchline, that Jesus calls us to receive a life giving bread from heaven. A truly wonder bread. Which will not merely build strong bodies twelve ways, but will meet the hunger beneath all other hungers, the longing for a knowledge of God. "I am the bread of life", said Jesus. He who comes to me shall not hunger. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. And that brings us back to the world of hot tubs and half tons. And it leads us to confront our own hungers. Our search for meaning. The quest to discover our best selves. Sometime ago, Garrison Keillor of Lake Wobegon fame talked about his son, who at the time was 15 years old. He said that his son had taken up the electric guitar, and that his music tended toward the heavy metal blues variety. When Keillor was working at home, writing at the typewriter downstairs, he could hear his son playing. And he was distressed because the music was, as he put it, "soul wrenchingly sad." Keillor went on to wonder about the source of his son's anguish. Where did he learn that? I give him enough money. I'm a nice dad. We get along well. I give him lots of things, he does well in school. Where's he get this anguish? And then he answered his own question. I guess we all got it inside of us. We all got it inside of us. We all got this anguish. We all search the desire to know who am I, and why am I here, and what am I for is inherent in all of us. We want the wheel of fortune to stop on the big money, but we'll take any number so long as it promises a framework of identity and purpose. We're all hungry people looking for bread. Living bread. "If anyone eats this bread," said Jesus, he will live forever." Forever? Not any of us wants to die. But who wants to live forever? Have you walked down the corridors of the veteran's hospital across the way lately? Have you visited the nursing home recently? Who wants to carry all of that baggage down some eternal hallway? My sermon on eternal life had been much too futuristic. Too much sweet by and by, not enough tough here and now. Parishioners have a way of injecting their ministers with massive doses of humility. As did the one who said on the way out of the church, "all of those things may be nice, but I'm mostly interested in making it till Friday." And so are you. We tend to spot those short terms goals and have

a way of moving from crisis to crisis. If I can just get through this exam. If I can just make it through the summer. If I can just get through this wedding. And it won't be long before you hear people saying, "if I can just make it through Christmas." Getting through to our own next Friday has become, for most of us, a way of life. When you've got a station wagon full of screaming kids and you're headed for the pool, you're not vitally concerned about the next life. You're mostly interested in escaping this one. Jesus talked about living bread, producing eternal life. And he celebrated the daily-ness of it. Eternal life in the future? Yes it has that dimension. But also eternal life in the now. And we're not so much concerned with life that has no end as we are with life that has no quality. In New York City's Hayden Planetarium, that yankee counterpart of our Morehead, there's a sign that grabbed my attention and wouldn't let go. Down at the end of the concourse, there is a directional marker which says, "to the solar system and restrooms." Now that's a magnificent combination of the earthy and the heavenly. The far off-ness of the eternal, and the urgency of the right now. And most of us are far more concerned about finding the restrooms than we are about exploring the solar system. Life has a daily-ness and an earthiness about it. And God meets us in the midst of that daily-ness and that earthiness and says he is the bread of life and offers us a quality of life that he called eternal. It's quite remarkable how this feeding story ends. The people dispersed. Jesus and his disciples went off to some forgotten and unpronounceable place. There was no basking in the afterglow of a great event. No follow up to get the people enlisted in a cause. No plans to meet again and do it next year. The party's over. It's back to the drawing boards. Back to the classrooms and the offices and the community meetings. For Jesus having fed us sends us back into the real world from which we came. With the assurance that God is our host. Or hostess, if you prefer. And that he is present at every table from the kitchen to the dining hall, from Bacchus to Burger King. One of North Carolina's up and coming young authors is Kaye Gibbons. A young woman from Rocky Mount who as a teenager was in and out of our house like a member of our family. Kaye Gibbons is the author of a very successful first novel titled Ellen Foster. Sweet, spunky Ellen is an 11 year old orphan who tells her story about going to live with her foster family. In good, colorful, Southern but childlike prose, she says her father drank his self to death and her mother had a bad heart dating back to romantic fever when she was young. She talks about the meager rations and the biscuits that were on her table in her natural home. How the food was scarce during her childhood years and how all of that gave way to a greater abundance in her new family. And she told about eating her breakfast and sitting at the breakfast table and comparing what she had on her plate with the picture on the cereal box. Toast, eggs, juice, milk, cereal. It all matches. It all matches. Thou preparest us a table before me. Bread for our hunger. Purpose for our aimlessness. Strength for our weakness. Grace for our sins. It all matches. It's all bread from heaven to feed a hell of a world like ours. (church organ music) (choir singing) (choir singing) (choir singing) (choir singing)

- Let us unite in this historic confession of the Christian faith. I believe in God the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only son, our lord, who is conceived by the holy spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified dead and buried. The third day he rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the father almighty. From thence he shall to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the holy spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting, amen. The lord be with you. Let us pray. Bread of the world. God satisfies our hungers beneath our hungers, and quenches our thirst beyond our thirst. We have looked at you and your work, and seen none other than the living God. This

is why we pray to you. Because we have come before you so many times, and you have not sent us empty away. We pray for those who suffer this day, because of the inhumanity of war. Extinguish fires of hate, flamed by the passions of men and women. We pray for people for whom their nation is God, and their flag is holy. Silence the guns, increase international understanding and convict us of our own complicity in the violence and war around us. We pray for those who suffer from illness of the body or the mind. Particularly we pray for those who worship with us in Duke hospitals. We pray for sufferers from cancer or AIDS or depression or alcoholism and all other sicknesses. People whom we often ignore. Because their illness reminds us of our own vulnerability. But we pray because we know you never ignore. We pray for people on vacation. Praying especially for those whose vacation includes worship here in this chapel. Give us times in life when we busy people are set free from daily responsibilities, and have the time to enjoy the wonder of family. The gift of good friends. The grace to do nothing. We pray for those who suffer from lack of rain or excessive heat. Nature has reminded us this summer of the fragility of our existence. And our dependency upon forces we do not control for life itself. Oh God in time like these, when quiet, overwhelmed by soaring arches of this great chapel, or inundated by life's great problems. Trapped in our bad habits and addictions or depressed over the future of this fragile island Earth home of ours. It's time like these that we are made to acknowledge our weakness. Our emptiness. Our hungers and thirst. And thus cry out to you for shelter. We cry out to you to feed us. And to do for us those things which we cannot do for ourselves. And thus we pray. Amen. As a forgiven and reconciled people, let us offer ourselves and our gifts to God. (upbeat church organ music) (upbeat church organ music) ♪ Hallelujah halle-halle-hallelujah amen ♪ ♪ Hallelujah halle-halle-hallelujah amen ♪ ♪ Hallelujah halle-halle-hallelujah amen ♪ (choir singing) ♪ Hallelujah halle-halle-hallelujah amen ♪ ♪ Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice ♪ (choir singing) ♪ Hallelujah halle-halle-hallelujah amen ♪ ♪ Hallelujah halle-halle-hallelujah amen ♪ ♪ Hallelujah halle-halle-hallelujah amen ♪ (choir singing) ♪ Hallelujah halle-halle-hallelujah amen ♪ ♪ Hallelujah halle-halle-hallelujah amen ♪ ♪ Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice ♪ (choir singing) ♪ Hallelujah halle-halle-hallelujah amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (church organ music) (church organ music) (choir singing) ♪ Hallelujah hallelujah ♪ (choir singing) ♪ Hallelujah hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ Thanks be to God. As near be to us as bread and family and good jobs and good friends. Thanks be to God who gives us what we need. Who does not desert us when we are unlovable or unlovely. Thanks be to God who shelters us when we are weak and small. Thanks be to God who prods us when we are complacent. Who judges us when we would excuse ourselves. Who shows us truth when we would be content to live by error. Thanks be to God who blesses us as we go forth. Thanks be to God who has taught us by his blessed son Jesus 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 forever. Amen. (triumphant church organ music) (choir singing) (choir singing) (choir singing) (choir singing) 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. (choir singing a cappella) (choir singing a cappella) (fast church organ music) (fast church organ music) (church organ music) (soft church organ music) (soft church organ music)