

Narrator: Good morning. Welcome to our live telecast of the Duke University Chapel Easter Service. WTVD is proud to telecast this beautiful observance of Easter from this magnificent chapel. The presiding minister for this morning's service is the Reverend Ms. Nancy A. Ferree, Assistant Minister to the university. The lector is Mr. Mark D. Hipps, President of Duke Campus Ministry. This morning's sermon will be delivered by the Reverend Dr. William H. Willimon, minister to the university. The director of the choir and instrumentalists is Mr. J. Benjamin Smith. (choir singing) (lively big band music) (choir singing)

- Hallelujah, Christ the Lord is risen. (congregation mumbling) And a voice from the throne said behold, I make all things new. (congregation mumbling) Mighty God, by your power, Christ is raised from death to rule this world in love. We praise you for his presence with us because he lives, we look for eternal life, confident that nothing past, present or yet to come can separate us from your great love in Christ, amen. Be seated.

- Let us pray.

All: Oh living God, bring us forth from death to life so that as the scriptures are read and your word is proclaimed, we might be brought to a sure and living faith in your Lordship, amen.

- The epistle lesson is taken from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ we are of all men most to be pitied but in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep for as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam, all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order. Christ the first fruits, then at his coming, those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. This ends the reading of the first lesson. The gospel lesson is taken from John. Now of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved and said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him. Peter then came out with the other disciple and they went toward the tomb. They both ran but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying and the napkin which had been on his head not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who reached the tomb first also went in and he saw and believed for as yet they did not know the scripture that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb and as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had layen, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, woman, why are you weeping? She said to them because they have taken away my Lord and I do not know

where they have laid him. Saying this she turned round and saw Jesus standing but she did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek? Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, sir, if you have carried him away tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away. Jesus said to her, Mary, she turned and said to him in Hebrew, (speaking in foreign language) which means teacher. Jesus said to her, do not hold me for I have not yet ascended to the Father but go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my father and your father, to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples I have seen the Lord and she told him that he had said these things to her. This ends the reading of the gospel. (choir singing) ♪ Though I am fallen to you ♪ ♪ A mystery ♪ ♪ We shall not go to sleep ♪ ♪ When he comes ♪ ♪ We shall not sleep ♪ ♪ When he comes ♪ ♪ But we shall all ♪ ♪ Be changed ♪ ♪ All be changed ♪ ♪ Shall all be changed ♪ ♪ We shall all be changed ♪ ♪ Shall all be changed ♪ ♪ In one moment, a moment ♪ ♪ In the twinkling of an eye ♪ ♪ At the sound, the sound of the trumpet ♪ (choir singing) ♪ And then ♪ ♪ What of all ♪ ♪ Was written ♪ ♪ The same shall be brought ♪ ♪ To pass ♪ (choir singing)

- Today's scripture from the book of Acts and Peter opened his mouth and said, truly I perceive that God shows no partiality but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable. You know the word which he sent to Israel preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ, he is the Lord of all. The word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the Devil for God was with him and we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem, they put him to death by hanging him on a tree. But God raised him on the third day and made him manifest to all. When I first read the lesson, it seemed an odd text for an Easter Sunday. And Peter opened his mouth and said truly I perceive God shows no partiality. But in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable. You know the word which he sent, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, how he went about doing good and healing, they put him to death by hanging him on a tree but God raised him up on the third day. Well it's a story, yes, and it's an Easter story. Since it is a narration, whose brevity would do any preacher credit, of the resurrection. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree but God raised him up on the third day. And that about sums it up. The next time someone asks you what do Christians believe? You simply turn in your Bible to Acts 10, and it's all there. Here is one of the oldest and maybe the shortest summaries of the story which gave birth to the church. They put him to death, God raised him on the third day. And yet no one asked, "Hey Peter, "tell us an Easter story." No, what they said was at First Church Jerusalem, "Hey Peter, what were you doing with them?" See, they were angry because word had gotten back to them that Peter had just baptized Cornelius. Cornelius, a Roman, a gentile, a soldier. And when Peter got back to first Church Jerusalem, he had some explaining to do. You ate with those Romans. Yeah. Lasagna and other unclean fast foods. You baptized them? Well, Peter said, you told me to go spread the word. Sure but within limits. You way overstepped your bounds, fisherman. Went over the limit, passed all proper distinctions. And at the mention of limits, boundaries, distinctions, Peter said, I've found that God shows no (speaking in foreign language), no partiality. Or as it's translated in the Jerusalem Bible, God doesn't have favorites. It's a thought found elsewhere in scripture. God is not partial. He will not take a bribe, Deuteronomy 10. In Galatians 2:6 when Paul is questioned about relationships between slaves and masters, Paul says God shows no partiality. God doesn't know the difference between slave and free, Jew,

Greek, male, female. Or when they asked Jesus, Jesus said, he makes the sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust. God is impartial. And I know of no sadder sight in academia than a professor who plays favorites or a student who makes distinctions between different colors of his fellow students. Or a university administrator who enforces the rules for some but not for all. God shows no partiality says Peter. And you and I, Gentile, Johnny come latelies to the house of Israel can take delight that God shows no partiality because if God did, you and I wouldn't be here. But you can sure understand how those Jewish Christians were upset with Peter. A Gentile? A Roman? A soldier? A man whose sword hung at his side signified both his security forces and the KGB and the Gestapo all rolled into one, a man who just following orders was the sort of person who only a few months before had hung their beloved Jesus up on a cross to die. And Peter baptized him. But why did you do it they wanted to know, how could you, you an ignorant fisherman, who only a couple of years ago didn't know anything more than how to tell a carp from a flounder, you decide to lay aside 2,000 years of time-honored tradition and baptize this Roman. And Peter answered, God shows no partiality. Because Jesus of Nazareth they put him to death but God raised him up on the third day. In other words, Peter said Easter made him do it. They asked Peter how he could kick down this venerable wall of distinction and Peter answered by telling them an Easter story. "Something there is that doesn't love a wall," writes the poet Frost. But you better learn because you'll spend most of your life between walls, life is intramural. There's one between East and West Berlin and one between the Arabs and the Israelis. The way to live with the Soviets, build a big high wall, stack the bombs, they put on one and then we put on a bigger one and we keep stacking it higher and higher, national defense, that's just a fancy way of saying Partiality, partition, apartheid, dirty words, I'm sure they all have the same linguistic derivation. In our distant past, somebody looked across the field and saw his neighbor and when their eyes met, he looked around on the ground for a stone, he picked up one stone and then another stone and another and I bet that humanity invented walls before we discovered wheels. And you can paint it. You can fresco it, you can graffiti it but it's still a wall, a partition, a boundary and it does a good job of keeping him out. And an even better job of keeping you in. Because with walls, sometimes it's hard to know whether you're locked in or out. 'Cause once the thing is built, everybody feels like a prisoner with walls. Well, you know her, he said of his fellow Duke student, she is the BMW Spring at Fort Lauderdale Set. Case closed, got that wall all in place. What else is growing up except learning about the boundaries, learning about the walls. Here is a six-year-old going out for his first day of school, triumphantly parading out to this new adventure, eyes so bright. Go back and look at that child 10 years later. What happened to the bright eyes? Well you see, the bright eyes got dulled after the standardized tests and the report cards and keep both feet on the floor young man and write between the lines. I'm just not good in math, he says. Girls are not supposed to play soccer, she says as she leaves the field. Well, good, good, they've learned about the boundaries, the limits, the walls and when they've discovered more about their limits, we'll give them a diploma and call them mature. And if they get too out of line, we'll get 'em a therapist to help them adjust to the walls. It's what I do as a preacher in the hospital all the time. I meet the doctor coming out of the patient's room. He says to me okay, preacher, I've shown him the wall, you go in there and help him live with it. And I go in and stand at bedside and say, Lord, grant us the serenity to live with these walls. One day, when I was about 20, I was talking with a guy my age who had never seen New York City. We pooled our money and found out that we had enough to get to New York. We left that very afternoon, drove all the way from South Carolina to New York. We went up the Empire State Building right after sunrise, went out on the Staten Island Ferry, saw two Swedish movies, walked around down at Greenwich Village, got back in the car,

came back in time to see sunrise over the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. But this year I'll be 40. Wanna go to Asheville? No, no. (congregation laughing) I've learned my limits, I'll just stay here, take a nap. (congregation laughing) Oh, you laugh. You laugh. Many of you are young, still straining at the limits, dancing along the boundaries, that's what youth does. You think because you've done well in school, because you got in a place like Duke and because you're young and you've never even known heartburn, you think you can do anything you like. You're part of the new wave, the new generation, ignoring past prejudices and distinctions, you won't live your life by the same boundaries of race and sex and ideology as your parents. You're free, impartial. But come back at 40 and we'll see. But there is one wall that even you won't get over. There's no way around that one. You can jog, you can eat yogurt, you can think positively, but one day your super highway will dead end against a blank wall that nobody gets over. We shall die. Jean-Paul Sartre wrote a story, *The Wall*, in which a group of men are sitting around and talking and awaiting death by a firing squad in the Spanish Civil War. As the hour of their death approaches, when they must stand before that wall, eyes blindfolded and meet their deaths, they begin to think. One says, "With what eagerness I had run after happiness. "And women and liberty and to what end? "I wanted to liberate Spain, "I belong to the Anarchist movement, "I spoke at public meetings, "I took everything as seriously "as if I had been immortal. "I had the impression "that I had my whole life before me. "And now it isn't worth anything. "Death has taken the charm out of everything." And that's what death does. So, why should I criticize those who get all they can and strive and achieve and eat and drink and be merry? Maybe they're the smart ones because they've learned that life has its limits and you better grab all you can while you can before your head hits solid against that dark wall that nobody gets over. In criticizing the hedonism and the alleged self-centeredness of many of today's campuses one commentator writes, "Faced with a nuclear threat, "a shrinking future, gloomy economic students, "today's students feel "that they are on the Titanic. "The thing may be sinking "but at least they can be on the first class deck "when it goes down." The BMWs, the clothes, the career, the frantic search for fun. It's their way of living with the wall. And if we can't get over the wall, we can at least plant roses in front of it. Accept reality, face the facts, which all means know your limits. Learn to live with the boundaries, including the biggest, most inviolable boundary of all: death. And then there comes this fisherman still breathless from scaling the wall to reach over to embrace an outsider. Saying truly I perceive that God shows no partiality. God will not love a wall. On Good Friday you see, they nailed him shut, somebody disturbing our peace, somebody not recognizing the status quo, admiring our boundaries, well, we've got an answer for that, kill him, seal the tomb shut. And just when we had all these walls, our limits fixed so firmly in place, insiders, outsiders, possible, impossible, life, death, he ripped away the veil in the Holy of Holies, tore off the shroud, rolled the stone away, scaled the wall and we so impressed by our limits, so well adjusted to the walls, come to church, shocked again this Easter to find him waving at us from the other side. He's loose. And what's more, he wants to set you and me loose because God shows no partiality. (lively organ music) (choir singing)

Minister: The risen Christ be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Let us pray. Most kind and gracious God, who called forth thy son from the grave making life the victor over death, we bow in prayer before thee seeking a fresh awareness of thy reality and of thy resurrecting

presence. In so doing, we offer these prayers for others that in our remembering of their needs, we may be reminded of our own neediness as we stand in utter dependency upon thee. Let us pray for those who suffer in our world, for the masses of starving people that whatever language they may speak, their cries of anguish will be heard. For homeless people everywhere, for those who dwell in the streets of our nation's cities, for thousands of refugees who roam the Earth searching for a place to call home. For runaway children who feel home is more of a hindrance to their growth than a help, that each may find a place of rest and understanding. For those who are bereaved over the loss of a loved one, over news of a debilitating illness, over memories of happier days gone by, that thy healing presence may restore them to fullness of life. Let us pray for those caught in the struggles of discernment, for all those contemplating life-changing decisions, grant them wisdom and a true sense of thy presence in their lives, for those who seek to know thee yet struggle to believe. Grant them the courage necessary to take the leap of faith. For leaders of all the nations that they may understand and respond to the needs of all the world's peoples and lead us in the pathway of peace. Let us pray for all who feel unloved or unwanted, for those who seek to injure themselves or others, for those who indulge in material excesses attempting to fill an interior void. For those who live within institutions surrounded by people yet lonely beyond words. Heal these thy children, oh God that they may appreciate the unique worth which thou has bestowed upon them. These and the many unspoken concerns of this congregation we lift unto thee, redeeming God, trusting in thy goodness, confident in thy power to save, grateful that thou art love for all eternity. In the name of Jesus Christ our risen Lord we pray. Amen. And now in the spirit of thanksgiving that God has raised Christ from the dead, let us offer our gifts and ourselves to God. (operatic singing) (lively organ music) (congregation singing) ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ (congregation singing) ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ Amen ♪

- Almighty God, power of life, we thank you for all your mercies and for your loving care over all your creatures, especially we praise you that you have not abandoned us to the death of sin and despair that with Jesus Christ you have lifted us up from the grave. Grant that we might live in newness of life, that we might ourselves know the power of resurrection now and in the world to come. This we pray in the name of the risen Christ who taught us to pray.

All: Our father who art in heave, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in heave. 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, the power and the glory forever. Amen. (dramatic band music) (choir singing) (dramatic band music)

- And now may the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who has come from death to life be with you now and evermore. ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (lively organ music)

Narrator: You've been watching a live telecast of the Duke University Chapel Easter Service from the campus of Duke University. Stay tuned to WTVD11 for Curious Kaleidoscope coming up next here on WTVD11.