

- Good morning and welcome to this service of worship in Duke Chapel. This is one of our very joyous services as we welcome our new freshmen, a new class, and the opening of a new academic year here at Duke. Next Sunday is our official opening Sunday and President Brodie and others will be with us for that special service. We're glad that you're here today. Today we will, after the service, have lemonade and fellowship out on the lawn and the arcade in front of the chapel at the conclusion of the service and we hope you'll stop for that time of fellowship together. In your bulletins today, everyone should have received a small slip of paper. We would ask everyone in the congregation to fill out this attendance registration. From this data, we will get some valuable information about the composition of our Sunday congregation. And if you're so inclined and would be willing to answer a confidential questionnaire about chapel worship, we invite you to fill in your name and address at the bottom of the sheet. Everybody is asked to complete the form and to drop it in the offering plate as the offering is received today. Even if you filled out one of these sheets last Sunday, we need you to fill it out again this Sunday to give us a picture of the composition of the congregation. If you don't have one of the sheets, you can obtain one at the back desk as you leave. Thanks for your help with this. We're delighted to have our chapel choir back after the summer recess. New students are in the choir. They will be having auditions for the choir this coming week. If you would like to join the choir, there's still audition spaces available. We're glad to have our choir back and now let us join together as we fill this great church with the praise of God. ♪ Beautiful Savior ♪ ♪ Lord of all nations ♪ ♪ Son of God ♪ ♪ And Son of Man ♪ ♪ Glory and honor ♪ ♪ Praise, adoration ♪ ♪ Now and forever ♪ ♪ Holy God ♪ ♪ Now and forever ♪ ♪ Divine ♪ (dramatic choir music with drums and horn instruments) ("A Mighty Fortress is our God")

- Oh, eternal God, You have taught us to keep all Your commandments by loving You and our neighbor. Grant us the grace of Your Holy Spirit that we may be devoted to You with our whole heart and united to one another with pure affection. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

- Let us pray. (lector and congregation together) Open our hearts and minds, oh 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. Give judgment for me, oh God, for I lived with integrity. I have trusted in the Lord and have not faltered. (congregation responding) I have not sat with the worthless, nor do I consort with the deceitful. I have hated the company of evildoers. I will not sit down with the wicked. I will wash my hands in innocence, oh Lord, that I may go in procession round Your altar, singing aloud a song of thanksgiving and recounting all Your wonderful deeds. (congregation responding) Do not sweep me away with sinners, nor my life with those who thirst for blood, whose hands are full of evil plots, and their right hand full of bribes. (congregation responding) (choir music) The epistle is taken from Paul's letter to the Romans. I appeal to you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and

perfect. For by the grace given to me, I bid everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him. For as in one body we have many members, and all of the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. If prophecy, in proportion to our faith. If service, in our serving. He who teaches, in his teaching. He who exhorts, in his exhortation. He who contributes, in liberality. He who gives aid, with zeal. He who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. This ends the reading of the epistle. The gospel is taken from Matthew. From that time, Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and on the third day, be raised. And Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him saying, God forbid, Lord, this shall never happen to You. But He turned and said to Peter, get behind Me, Satan, you are a hindrance to Me, for you are not on the side of God, but of men. Then Jesus told His disciples, if any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake, will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? For the Son of Man is to come with His angels in the glory of His Father and then He will repay every man for what he has done. Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom. This ends the reading of the gospel. (choir music)

- If you're a freshman here, I think you'll agree with me that one of the more exciting aspects of your first days of college is getting to know your roommate. I know it was for my first days of college. I remember my first day of college, I got to my room before my roommate. He arrived bearing two suitcases. He put down his suitcases and his first words to me were, is Will Willimon your real name or are you just trying to be cute? (congregation laughing) We had a lot to work out, my roommate and I. Now, I don't know whether you're in a market for a new roommate or not, but I can tell you someone whom you would not want to be your roommate. Your mother might like for this person to be your roommate, but even your mother would not want to live nextdoor to the person who is responsible for Psalm 26. Hell would be a Saturday night in the presence of the person who prayed Psalm 26. Would you listen to him pray? I have walked with integrity. I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. I walk in faithfulness to thee. I do not sit with false people, nor do I consort with dissemblers. I hate the company of evildoers. I will not sit with the wicked. I wash my hands in innocence and go about thy altar, oh Lord, singing aloud a song of thanksgiving and telling of thy wondrous deeds. Can you believe this person? It's people like him who give religion a bad name. I don't know if you remember him, but you've met him before. You've heard him pray before. Jesus tells a story about two people who come to the temple to pray. One was a tax collector, the other, the religious one, was a Pharisee and Jesus said the Pharisee stood over by himself, so not as to be contaminated by sinners and he prayed thus to himself, Lord, I thank thee that I am not like other people, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even this tax collector over there. Lord, I fast, twice a week. I give tithes of everything that I earn. My hands are clean. Mark Twain once spoke of a man as a good man in the very worst sense of the word. And here he is, Psalm 26. God, I thank thee that I am so good. I have not wavered. I have not sat with evil people in the rat's galler, dissemblers, drug takers, heavy drinkers, adulterers, blasphemers, fornicators, sodomisers or other people who do those things which are described by those strange words in the Bible that we're not sure what they mean, but we know they're bad. Lord, my hands are clean. Oh, there's some

psalms which rage at God. There's some psalms which cry out, my God, why and what is happening and where art thou, but not Psalm 26. No, here is cool, calm, collected button-downed religion. It is the religion of the Covenant. I will be your God, you will be my people. It is my job as God to make the rules, it is your job to obey the rules. If you obey My law, all will go well with you. God, I have obeyed Your law. All shall be well with me. His prayer, what the psalmist has to say to God, is an inventory of his virtue. He's in church to remind God of how well he's kept up his side of the bargain. It's God's job to make the rules, it's our job to follow the rules. Unlike a lot of our prayers, he doesn't bother God, asking God to do things or to give him anything. What does he need from God? His hands are clean. The relationship with God is cool and fixed and settled and complete and finished. All you come to church for is to reiterate the terms of the agreement, the settlement, to go over it one more time. We are God's cherished ones, let's get together on Sunday morning and check one another out, make sure our social attitudes are suitably progressive and that our hands are clean. Who prayed this psalm? It is the psalm of an obedient person. It is the psalm of those who live confidently and comfortably within the structure. It is the prayer of the older brother who always stayed home and did what mama and daddy told him. Not the prayer, the groveling prayer of that prodigal younger son who had a taste for loose living and harlots. It the prayer of those who are blessed by the Duke Admissions Office. I don't care what the admissions office tells you about wanting a well-rounded study body. The admissions office is out looking for the person who prayed Psalm 26. (congregation laughing) I was talking with a student some time ago, and I asked him sort of in jest, I said, were you always the perfect son? Did you always fulfill your parents' expectations? And he looked back at me and he said, well, I wouldn't be here, would I, if I were a slouch? Lord, I have always done my homework. When the book was assigned, I did not go out and buy CliffsNotes. (congregation laughing) When we had a book report, I did not go down and get The Red Badge of Courage, I got Tale of Two cities to report on. (congregation laughing) Captain of the debating team, National Merit finalist, Eagle Scout, Lord, my hands are clean. And it's only natural that if you were the good son or daughter, the perfect child, it's only natural that you should come to church in much the same way that you've come to Duke Coat and tie, mind your manners, no ambiguity here, nothing to confuse, honor the covenantal arrangement and all will go well for you. Life is this neat, symmetrical equation of obedience, compliance. Here I am on Sunday, taking inventory of my virtues. Integrity, check. Faithfulness, check. Your job is to be obedient, right, to keep your hands clean and don't press God too much about things. And God's job is to respond and to be there when we push the right obedience button. Our job is to study hard and to take good notes, play by the rules and God responds accordingly. George, did you wash your hands before dinner? Yes, ma'am. And yet the trouble is, the trouble is what you've already figured out, probably, the trouble is if you push this sort of thing far, you are well on your way to a lone, autonomous believer who never really engages some transcendent partner. You just don't need God for religion of clean hands. Go back sometime and look again at Jesus' story of the Pharisee and the publican and note how many times "I" and "me" and "my" is used in that prayer. God, I thank thee that I am not like other people. I tithe, I pray, I give. My obedience and my virtue determines the shape of the divine-human relationship. The Pharisee assumes that this reward-obedient system is in good working order. Jesus said that the Pharisee stood by himself and he prayed, he prayed by himself, he prayed to himself. God, I thank thee for me. You don't need God when "I" is the center of everything. Count the times that I and me and my is used in Psalm 26. I have walked, I have trusted, my heart, my mind, my eyes, I walk, I do not sit, nor do I consort, I hate, I wash my hands, I love my life, I walk, redeem me, I will bless. And the end result of this dull, frozen, fixed religion of the I and the me and the my, is the very disillusion of the

divine-human relationship. You don't need God for a religion where you're good as god. And when transcendence is closed and fixed and unambiguous and hands are clean, you have autonomous lives and autonomous believers and self-worship is inevitable. And I think this is the dominate characteristic of much that passes for religion. A kind of dignified atheism. I am the measure of all things. Religion is atheistic when it no longer needs God to make it work. This man eats and drinks with sinners and tax collectors they said of Jesus, and you remember how Jesus responded? Tongue-in-cheek, if you're well, you don't need a doctor. You people are so well and healthy and together. Let me make it clear, I've just come for the sick. I've come for the weak and the vulnerable and the sinful. Oh, we come to church on Sunday morning and we busy ourselves with the empty forms of obedience, plodding through the hymns, mumbling through the prayers, all of which seem so dumb since we're only talking to ourselves anyway. Church comes to resemble a decayed marriage in which the partners of the marriage go through the empty forms of love. They go through the dry rituals of affection because all the passion is gone. There's no surprise in the relationship anymore. There's no mystery, there's nothing to shock. There's no point for rage. There's nothing. You put on your hat and your coat after the service and go out and you come back next Sunday and you take off your hat and your coat, just like Mr. Roger's Neighborhood, everything in place, pews still bolted down, alter still where it should be. Let's get on with this thing, we've got to be done by noon. During the gay rights march in Durham last summer, you could tell the religious people. They were the ones holding the placards which said, I'm going to be in heaven, where will you be? Who's prayer is Psalm 26? You know. It is the prayer of the successful and the right. The prayer of the one for whom things have worked out. I wanted to be captain of the team and I worked hard and I got it. I wanted to get into Duke, and I studied hard and I got it. I wanted that job. I showed them my Duke transcript, I got it. I wanted her for my wife, I got her. It is the prayer for when you're young and have the world at your feet and your barns are full and the vineyards are productive. It is the prayer for bright, sunny Sundays, with all of us here in dresses and coats and ties and hair tastefully styled. God, I thank thee for me. And from what I can tell, all will go well for you as long as you stay right and the sun shines and your tie is straight and your star is in ascendancy. And your hands are clean, you can pray Psalm 26 and groom your virtues. And you can get along quite nicely by yourself without God. You don't need God for that. But I tell you, you better keep checking your hands. Early in my ministry, I became acquainted with a young man in my church who was active in college in a conservative religious group on campus. He was a Biblical fundamentalist, and he always knew how to embarrass his preacher because he always had the right Bible verse on the tip of his tongue. For every occasion, I don't care what issue came up, he said, preacher, you know, I think this was settled in Matthew 8:12. And I said, oh, yes, yes, good point. (congregation laughing) He was the all-American boy, everything in place. Then one year, I remember for the Christmas holidays, he came back and I thought I noted a change in him. Something that I found I liked better. I asked him, and he confessed to me that on a campus religious retreat, he had, as he said, fallen from grace sexually. He said he was shocked that I, a born again biblical Christian could be capable of such sin. And then I said, I know what it is now that I like about you. You're real. I'm dealing with a person now, not some stilted facade. I bet now that your religion will be a way of dealing with the facts of life, rather than a means of suppressing or denying those facts. You can't pray Psalm 26 with a straight face any longer. But, the good news is, there're just lots more and lots better Psalms that you can pray, the ones that Jesus enjoyed praying. The psychotherapist Jung said that each of us wears a kind of mask, which he called a persona, from the mask which actors wore in Greek dramas. Jung said that the persona is this mask that we put on as we face the world and we look at other people. The persona is the mask and underneath the mask,

he said, is the shadow, where we hide those aspects of ourselves which we consider unacceptable or unworthy. Jung said, the brighter the shadow, the brighter the persona, the darker the shadow underneath. Sometime after graduation a few years ago, he appeared in my office and he had been suffering from terrible depression, he said. He had even been hospitalized on one occasion. He said, but my psychotherapist believes that I'm making progress. You know, it's funny, he said, when I came here to Duke as a freshman, I was self-confident, I was self-assured, I knew what I believed. But, now, now that I've graduated from Duke, I don't where I am. I feel weak and small. And I said with a gentle smile on my face, look, I can explain this to you quick. When you came here as a freshman at 18, you were ignorant. With your block letter sweater and the world at your feet, you really thought you were self-sufficient. You thought you could get by on your own. You knew what you knew. Everybody thinks that at 18. But look at you now. Congratulations. Jesus said you don't get into the Kingdom unless you're a little child. Jesus said you go forward by falling back. You know, you really did get a good education here. Let me see your hands. Amen. (organ music) ♪ Be thou my vision oh, Lord, of my heart ♪ ♪ Naught be all else to me, save that thou art ♪ ♪ Thou my best thought, by day or by night ♪ ♪ Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light ♪ ♪ Be thou my wisdom and thou my true word ♪ ♪ I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord ♪ ♪ Thou my great Father, I thy true son ♪ ♪ Thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one ♪ ♪ Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise ♪ ♪ Thou mine inheritance, now and always ♪ ♪ Thou and thou only, first in my heart ♪ ♪ High King of heaven, my treasure thou art ♪ ♪ High King of heaven, my victory won ♪ ♪ May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun ♪ ♪ Heart of my own heart, whatever befall ♪ ♪ Still be my vision, oh Ruler of all ♪

- The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Let us pray. Oh, eternal God, the source of all life, thou has searched us and known us and lovest us still. Such knowledge is high for us and we cannot attain it. Even in our imaginations, we cannot find thee out. How much more art thou, oh God, than our meager ways of thinking. Yet save us from despair over our failures and our dirty hands. For thou has revealed thyself to us through thy Son, Jesus Christ, and shown us the way to selfless giving. Grant us the courage to accept thy love for us, even as we acknowledge our inadequacies. We bring before thee, oh God, our varied conditions and concerns, gratefully acknowledging the depths of thy healing power. We bring before thee, creating God, the needs of our bodies. We pray for all those weakened by the plague of hunger and malnutrition, for all those who fall prey to terminal illness or other disease, and for their families. For all those who discover in the process of aging that their bodies are failing them. We bring before thee, redeeming God, the needs of our minds. We pray for all those involved in educational pursuits and especially for those new students, teachers, administrators and staff who have joined our community. For all those ravaged by the tyrannies of mental illness, for all those who seek to expand our minds, visionaries, explorers, creative artists. We bring before thee, sustaining God, the needs of our relationships. We pray for all those embroiled in conflict, between parent and child, between husband and wife, between friends and nations. For all those who suffer from a lack of relationships and are burdened by a sense of loneliness or worthlessness, for all those who are unable to relate openly and who have never fully revealed themselves to another. For all those who have resisted the opportunity to relate even unto thee, gracious God, and do not accept thee acceptance thou hast offered us. And now we bring

before thee in silence, oh God, the special needs of this congregation. We lift these prayers before thee, oh God, reassured that thou hast searched us and known us and lovest us still. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen. And now in the spirit of thanksgiving, let us joyfully present our gifts and ourselves unto God. (organ music) (choir music with horn instruments) ♪ Sing to the Lord a jubilant song ♪ ♪ Sing to the Lord a jubilant song ♪ ♪ Rejoice and sing and let the Earth be glad ♪ ♪ Let the heavens be filled with joy ♪ ♪ And a jubilant song ♪ ♪ Sing hallelujah to the Lord ♪ ♪ Sing hallelujah to the Lord ♪ ♪ Sing hallelujah to the Lord ♪ ♪ Sing hallelujah to the Lord ♪ ♪ Tell of His salvation from day to day ♪ ♪ Shout His marvelous works among the people ♪ ♪ For great is the Lord, great is the Lord ♪ ♪ And greatly to be praised ♪ ♪ Sing to the Lord a jubilant song ♪ ♪ Sing to the Lord a jubilant song ♪ ♪ Rejoice and sing and let the Earth be glad ♪ ♪ Let the heavens be filled with joy ♪ ♪ And a jubilant song ♪ ♪ Lord, you have been our refuge ♪ ♪ From one generation to another ♪ ♪ Before the mountains were made ♪ ♪ Or the land and the sea were born ♪ ♪ From age to age You are God ♪ ♪ And we pray for the coming of Your Kingdom ♪ ♪ We shall rejoice ♪ ♪ We shall be glad ♪ ♪ All the days of our lives ♪ ♪ Sing to the Lord a jubilant song ♪ ♪ Sing to the Lord a jubilant song ♪ ♪ Rejoice and sing and let the Earth be glad ♪ ♪ Let the heavens be filled with joy ♪ ♪ And a jubilant song ♪ ♪ And a jubilant song ♪ ♪ Sing to the Lord ♪ ♪ A jubilant song ♪ (organ music) ♪ Praise God from whom all blessings flow ♪ ♪ Praise Him all creatures here below ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ ♪ Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts ♪ ♪ Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Amen ♪

- Oh, God, how excellent is thy name in all the Earth. We thank thee for the mystery of our years and the will to live, for the rewards of solitude and the pleasures of good company, for the satisfactions of a job well done, and the challenges of new beginnings. Now we dedicate these gifts unto thee, eternal God, gratefully acknowledging the varieties and the abundance of thy mercies towards us. These things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ who taught us to pray with confidence, (reverend and congregation together) 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, the power, the glory, forever. Amen. (organ music) ♪ All hail the power of Jesus name ♪ ♪ Let angels prostrate fall ♪ ♪ Bring forth the royal diadem ♪ ♪ And crown Him, crown Him ♪ ♪ Crown Him ♪ ♪ Crown Him Lord of all ♪ ♪ Ye chosen seed of Israel's race ♪ ♪ Ye ransomed from the fall ♪ ♪ Hail Him who saves you by His grace ♪ ♪ And crown Him, crown Him ♪ ♪ Crown Him ♪ ♪ Crown Him Lord of all ♪ ♪ Let every tongue and every tribe ♪ ♪ Responsive to his call ♪ ♪ To Him all majesty ascribe ♪ ♪ And crown Him, crown Him ♪ ♪ Crown Him ♪ ♪ Crown Him Lord of all ♪ ♪ Oh, that with yonder sacred throng ♪ ♪ We at His feet may fall ♪ ♪ We'll join the everlasting song ♪ ♪ And crown Him, crown Him ♪ ♪ Crown Him ♪ ♪ Crown Him Lord of all ♪ And now go forth in peace and be of good courage. Hold fast to that which is good, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit and may the blessings of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (fast organ music)