

(choir singing indistinctly) (choir singing indistinctly) (choir singing indistinctly) (organ solo) (choir singing indistinctly) (organ solo) (choir singing indistinctly) (choir singing indistinctly) ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪

- You've heard it in the lesson. We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen, for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. This text speaks to our anxiety about making ends meet. This is not the dollars and cents anxiety. As a nation, we have made very great progress in the solution of the question with what to live, with what to make a living. But the question for what to live, to what end to live, is the source of a deep and an ultimate anxiety. For in it there is expressed despair, terror, and rage over the actual meeting of the appointed ends of our existence. The first of these ends is the good, the end for which we are created. The second is death, for we are mortal, and we are mortal by design and not accident. We are mortal by God's design and not the devil's. The good and our death, these are the appointed ends of our existence. But when these ends meet, despair, rage, and terror sprout in the soul. For these ends do indeed meet, and the violence of their collision makes a wasteland of our heart, in which despair, rage, and terror naturally grow. Yet if we try to separate these two ends from each other, as try we do, the results are unlivable lies. We think too much and too badly about death. And the good is ruined in us, the joy of the good. Its health and its peace are frostbitten and blighted by death. Then it is possible for us to love death more than life. Failure to find our good may force a surrender of the soul to the love of death. But if in our enjoyment of the good we are not rightly instructed by death, if we take no thought of that end, keep it always out of our view, then we are fools, fools of the Bible, to be exact. Then we feel and act as though we were destined to live forever, and allow precious life to sift through our fingers. Life, precious and irrecoverable, is wasted now in dreaming and now in irrational, galvanic lunges at the fleeting shadows of good things, which in substance are beyond our in-fleshed spirits. Such folly is death-dealing when it is unleashed from its ordained linkage with life's good. Death drives off against every instinct and sense of life along the desecrating journey into kingdom's folly. The shape and the movement of the outer world are no great comfort to us in this condition. That world says, "achieve," "compete," "scramble," "hustle," "be something," "get hold of plenty of something," "get hold of plenty of nothing." All of these demands, these summons, nudges, beckoning, punches, pulls, and tugs are gigantic public amplification of our internal agitation, for the awful din we hear and cannot flee is of course our own blood roaring in the inner ear, monstrously amplified. It's little wonder then that we cannot find a quiet place away from the turbulence of the outer world, a place, a walled garden, an inaccessible aerie, an unfrequented island, a place, a moment in which to be still and at peace. For even in such a perfect little hideaway, where the outer world is briefly hushed, the inner tumult persists. Death, terror, despair, rage tear to shreds the inner world. So when prophets warn us that the human race is threatened with a man-fashioned destruction, and in this crisis, this era of crises, elevate the protection of our way of life as the good to which the heart can wholly give itself, we turn away, sick with fright and disgust. For mortal and immortal enemies, we do indeed need protection. But shall we say also that the good for which we live is as uncertain of its future as we of ours? Or ought we rather in good faith to confess that good in amplitude sufficient for all living souls to live within it in peace and joy and in substance durable through every vicissitude, calamitous and irritating. Such good hardly needs defense against evil men, time, and death.

And least of all, that defense, which promises to turn the outer world into a desert and threatens now to drain the inner light of the last ounce of freedom over terror and rage. Where, then, shall we turn for prospects of life in which the proper ends of life come into view, to each other reconciled? Real good, well within the reach of mortal love, its beauty not destroyed by our destruction. Death, encompassed in a life unmarred by recoil into terror, rage, or despair. Today, where shall we turn? In the moment, where shall we turn? The turn is a turning again. The turn is a return. In the mind's eye, returning back over the route we have been rushing down in fearful hate, back over this route to the condition in which God created us, still remembered, still affirmed in pious sentiment, but also violently denied in act and desire. Of one mankind, God has created us, in one body, for one life. In one body only do we have the good of our creation, however far from that body rebellious spirit seeks to run and no matter how numerous, petty, and diseased the divisions the spirit in us make and cherishes. In God's creation, mankind is one community. Therefore, nothing which obscures that great divine fact can itself be good. For whatsoever divides as to set us against one another diminishes and corrupts us all. And whatever so unites us as to maximize the distinctive value of each of us enhances all of us. So we are created to have a life together and to be one people in the love of a common good. To that life, each of us is able to make a distinctive contribution. By that life, we are sustained and to be rebuked by that common life when we violate its requirements is part of its providence. And to know that God's own life has been committed to that light, for its perfection in good time is that pure gift of God we rightly call faith. But how far along what dusty and tortured road we have traveled from the community of God's creation, the communities in which we stand today are all fragments of the common human life, that great community: mankind itself. We who dwell in the fragments of community are ourselves only fractions of persons and irrational fractions, at that. The hardest kind to add up. We take our stand on being A, B, C, D, M, Q, out to Z, fight, Protestant, Democrat, I hope, American, educated, Sigma Nu. And hopefully, at the last, at the end, the hopeless, hapless, last: human beings. Ah, but at the last, we should arrive at the point from which we have begun, and from which we have splintered ourselves into thousands of irrational fractions. For are these fractional interests, in the sum, a life? The spirit really moves in all such parts? Reproving what needs reproof? Punishing what needs punishment? Cutting away dead tissue that new life may grow, fashioning a whole being and offering up both what he's doth achieved and what failed to such achievement, offering it all up to almighty God, in whose abundance of life we have both our life and our death. The fragments do not add up to a human life, and the reason is clear. The condition of the spirit. That is the reason. Spirit requires freedom to weave the diverse elements of existence into a significant living whole. That the elements be ever so diverse, all the way from humanity to Sigma Nu and back. If freedom is given to spirit and the unity of the ends of our creation come into view, good, rather than a merely useful life, will emerge. And we should like to see dropped from our lexicon the term, "the useful life," and with the God, "the good life" might take its place. Though the creation of such a life be difficult, beyond the comfort of the goodies that we all so greatly enjoy, its most painful moments are more meaningful than the happiest hours, accord to the life which does not add up and therefore remains a jumble of odds and ends stuck together in a crude working order by social pressure. In our time, social pressure has become omnipotent itself, required to shape us up for the day's work. As the day's work becomes less and less interesting to more and more people, the pressure required to shape them and control them for the sake of the day's work must be immensely increased. But this is just one kind of pressure applied by one kind of a public to which each of us belong. The societies upon which we depend for daily bread, for human warmth, for personal recognition, all of these are so many publics over which no

one overarching community of mankind appears visible in our view. So all of these publics, like each of us within these publics, are so many irrational fractions. Each reigns for supremacy in the position and the employment of power over us. Therefore the spirit commissioned originally to preside over the creation of an effective unity of life is reduced to the status of an errand boy, running from one public to the next, carrying out his mission, being a transit point for the communication of omnipotent social power. Because our grip upon essential human community seems weak even unto death, we are committed to an insane alternation of internal tyranny and civil war. But of course the claims made by all of these warring publics upon one another, and upon ourselves, every one of these claims is a fraudulent claim. And no matter the piety with which they are advertised, including the advertisement of the church public, which is just as familiar with the devices of power and the application of social pressure, as any other of our public is. All of these claims are fraudulent, every one, for none can provide what it is obliged in our time to promise, that kind of unity, each person with himself, each with others, in which alone health, joy, and peace are attainable. True, many of these clamorous groups have a partial value to communicate, but fullness of life, none of these has. So the claims they press home upon us are fraudulent precisely at the moment in which they are heard to promise fullness of life. But now an uneasiness agitates the spirit got, for all of their fraudulent demands upon us, to be loved absolutely, these fractions in which we vainly seek wholeness and fullness of light are at least concrete. They are at least visible. Here and now they stand of earth, earthy. Therefore, certainly just objects of our flesh-bound love, who have no native power to see and to love but does not live rooted in earth, as we live. So what is eternity, but an abstract box around which a time-frightened and time-disgusted soul may abstractly play. Now our uneasiness blossoms religiously. If our true good is something eternal, we stand from the start accursed of God, haunted pointlessly by things we cannot have except in poets' dreams. Is this then in all fairness the faith to which the gospel brings us? But does it not tell us that the true community God created and God redeemed, the blessed unity of humankind is something eternal and therefore unseen? So then what reality of direction and fulfillment can that invisible world give our lives? How can such an end come into our flesh-bound view? This question exposes a natural philosophic disposition to isolate the eternal from the temporal. Saint Paul's language encourages this disposition but not his faithful thought. In his faith, Jesus Christ is the eternal holy, come into time. In him, God comes and dwells in all the authority of holy righteousness. He comes into our life bringing our salvation. His own life, our salvation. A life for life. And so, in the faith of the Christian Paul, or whoever he is, the eternal world appears in the power of Christ. Christ's power makes us one in reality and not only in prophetic dreams. He reconciles the good with our death, and in him, God calls off to practice dying for the sake of others, even as Jesus Christ died for all mankind. That in him, what God has begun as a unity might be brought to glorious fruit. Therefore, the gospel speaks this word: Jesus Christ brings the kingdom of God into visibility. What is hidden from sight is the time of fulfillment of all mankind in that community, but there is nothing invisible about the power-making for that end. We feel it all about us, and within. Our trouble is that we look for something immensely grand. Something stupefyingly beautiful and power. For if God were so good as to provide doth for us, the grandiosity of our dreams, the greatness, and the fantastic extravagances of our self love would then soar above every rebuke time and flesh put in place. As it is, a dog barking in the night can shatter our dreams, hopelessly. And the being who leaps out at us from the mirror in the dawn's cold, gray light is a doubtful friend and a potentially traitorous lover. And as it is, we feel the power of Christ in the tug at our hearts and wills. The lowliest of human creatures, the poorest and not the grandest, can exert just by being wretched, or, for that matter, just by being joyous. Quickly we learn to

throttle that naturally good response to God's every creature. We throttle it until the person tugging at our hearts and our wills has been duly certified as to race, religion, politics, worldly goods, position to help us or hinder us in our pursuit of worldly plunder, geography, morality, and just plain likable-ness. Not many souls, living or dead, can pass all of those tests, any more than many of us would be willing to take our chances with such an admissions committee. Therefore, the community in which we live is likely to be narrow, unnatural, and alternately dull and violent. But not always. And, God grants, not for long. The spirit in us is under relentless pressure from Christ's spirit to break the yoke of these slavish restrictions, bending us out of Christ's shape in order that we may one day all stand up straight in the free air, and in the pure light of God's visible kingdom. And the power of the Lord Christ is visible in yet another way. As living spirits, each of us is invited to discover his freedom by using his freedom to enrich the life of all. This each of us can do only by himself, resolving to do so. Society can seduce or compel consent to its purposes, but genuine self resolution is finally and unbelievably personal and solitary. In the moment of resolution, one indeed is alone, more so I suspect than at any other moment, more so than in the moment of death. The great thing about death, among others, and we will not go through the inventory at this point. The great thing about death is that one is relieved of a necessity, in his own case, of seeing how the final facing of it affects thereafter the lives of others. He can imagine how it will affect them. And the insurance companies are powerful aid and accessories to the imagination, but he cannot know how it will affect the lives of others. But this is not so for the resolution, the self-determination to be oneself for the lives of others, a person hopes to do his best, but he may very well live to see how badly his best turns out for everybody. That is a risk we must all face, unless terror or despair of life has driven us out of the real common life into a hopeless privacy. If we are still in business with the common life, if we still love it and desire to see its good increase, then the power of Christ ministers to us, whether or not we rightly name him in prayers and blessings rather than in oath and implication. The power of Christ, yes. The love, which opens our eyes to see the good of God's creation and quickens our hearts to love it and nerves the will to seek it. And then again, the power of the Lord Christ releases us to our freedom. This means that we cannot claim Jesus Christ as warrant when we discard freedom, for even the noblest policy and program for social justice. Using all his passion and his skill, a Christian may contrive a splendid program for social justice. And speaking of the tongues of angels, at least leads to him momentarily for this purpose, he may arouse wide and powerful support for his program. But that does not in itself make it Christian. Christian is his will to serve the Lord when he loves what the Lord loves and Christian too is my will in opposing him when I love what the Lord loves. The people each of us would see blessed and whole. Not my people or his people, but God's people, and, therefore, one people, together. I have come at the end to this conclusion for an obvious reason: The outer world is a turbulence arena in which world strategies compete for the domination of mankind, most of them in the name of human freedom and dignity. Hardly anyone anymore announces as his social strategy injustice, tyranny, and the suppression of human rights, but each such strategy makes its bid for loyalty of all mankind, with all of the persuasions available, all of the persuasions, promises, and threats, arousements of terror and of rage. Not one of these strategies is either likely or fit to rule the world absolutely, but nonetheless, each of us must decide for one or the other of these world strategies. And we must decide without halfheartedness, without the dreadful double mind. Yet we dare not forget what we ought to love is actual people, existing people, more than we love strategies and the social orders the strategies are calculated to preserve. We cannot love mankind's future, unless first our love is rooted in the existence of living souls. And this is a demand of God's Christ. The garden of Eden was obviously a wonderful social

structure, but thank God God loved Adam and Eve more than he did the original social arrangement, a truly godly example to be followed by us all. In the name of this God, then, we ought to choose the strategies of freedom as one aspect of the choice to live for the good of the whole community of mankind. That choice has other aspects too, because God provides inexhaustible ways in which we can participate freely in the terror, the misery, and the guilt of lost souls everywhere, and in the peace and joy of bound souls everywhere. In the name of God we ought to choose the strategies of freedom, both for domestic and foreign consumption. These strategies are not perfect programs, if we need to be reminded of this, for the realization of the human good. But we are not sat in this life to seek that form of perfection. Nonetheless, we cannot fail to remark an unnecessary imperfection exposed in the appeal in these recent weeks to choose democracy and justice at home because of the international repercussions of not doing so. Am I to be kind and to deal justly with my neighbor, whatever or whoever he is, because men elsewhere on this earth will think badly of the United States of America if I do not do so? This is something to be considered, but in just relationship to something else. One who believes in Christ is given also to believe that it is God who is most fully offended by my sins against my brother. It is not our foreign policy that is most grievously harassed and embarrassed by our harsh and iniquitous dealings with our brother. Therefore. I must seek my brother's good, not because I like him or because I fail to like him, but because God has a distinctive place for him too in his community, transcending all our divisions and all of our love of our divisions. Truly, then, God is good, who gives to our in-fleshed spirits such power to enjoy the joy of others and to deny itself the souls lost in terror, in darkness, in rage, might find health, joy, and peace. Thus, the ends of our creation meet in Christ's community. A good adhering view for which can cheerfully risk the all-out expenditure of self, for that good will not fade into our sick and our gaudy dreams. Love this good we can, then, without stint or stain of corruption imposed by fear or guilt. For in that kingdom, and in that love, death is no longer an evil intruder. Living in death, we are all in God's hands, and in God's hands only. So we pray, so we work, so we praise all the day long. For the God who brought us to the beginning of this day will receive us at its end. Amen.

- Receive the benediction. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest upon you and abide with you now and ever more. (choir indistinctly singing) (bell chiming) (upbeat organ solo)