

(somber organ music)

- Good morning. Welcome to Duke Chapel on this Trinity Sunday. Our guest preacher today is the Reverend Doctor James L. Travis, Director of Pastoral Services at Duke University Medical Center, and Clinical Professor of Pastoral Care at the Divinity School. He holds graduate degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Emory University. It is our pleasure to welcome Dr. Travis once again to our pulpit at Duke Chapel. Please stand as we continue our worship with the greeting. In the name of The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit.

Congregation: Amen. (lively organ music) (choir sings)

- Let us pray. God of grace and glory, who made the heavens, the earth, and all that is in them. Who created us to be as children, and who has loved us as a Father and a Mother. Make your presence known to us as we worship this morning. Jesus, our Christ, who took on our humanity to redeem it from bondage to sin, may your name be praised from the rising of the sun to the midnight hour, and may our lives be a reflection of your life. Spirit of Holiness, who touched us with your power to make real God's love and God's presence in our lives, come among us again, that we might be bound together in Christian love and unity. Oh God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be known to us today, transform our lives and our community, in the image of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen. You may be seated.

- Let us pray together the prayer for illumination.

All: 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.

- The first reading is taken from the Book of Proverbs, the 8th chapter, starting with the 22nd verse. Wisdom is speaking of her origin. "The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, "The first of his acts, long ago. "Ages ago, I was set up at the first, "Before the beginning of the earth. "When there were no depths, I was brought forth; "When there were no springs abounding with water. "Before the mountains had been shaped, "Before the hills, I was brought forth. "When he had not yet made earth and fields, "Or the world's first bit of soil, "When he established the heavens, I was there. "When he drew a circle on the face of the deep, "When he made firm the skies above, "When he established the fountains of the deep, "When he assigned to the sea its limits, "So that the waters might not transgress his command, "When he marked out the foundations of the earth, "Then I was beside him, like a master worker. "And I was his delight, rejoicing before him always, "Rejoicing in his inhabited world, "And delighting in the human race." This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

- Today's Psalm is number 8, found on page 743 in the hymnal. Please stand and sing responsively. (organ music) ♪ ♪ Oh Lord, our Lord ♪ ♪ How majestic is your name in all the earth ♪ ♪ Your glory is chanted above all heavens ♪ ♪ By the mouth of babes and infants ♪ ♪ You have established strength because of your foes ♪ ♪ To still the enemy and the avenger ♪ ♪ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers ♪ ♪ The moon and stars which you have set in place ♪ ♪ What are human beings that you are mindful of them ♪ ♪ And the son of man that you care for him ♪ ♪ Yet you have made them little less than God ♪ ♪ And crowned them with glory and honor ♪ ♪ You have given them dominion over the works of your hands ♪ ♪ You have put all things under their feet ♪ ♪ All sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field ♪ ♪ The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea ♪ ♪ Whatever passes along the paths of the seas ♪ ♪ Oh Lord, our Lord ♪ ♪ How majestic is your name in all the earth ♪ ♪ All glory be to you, Creator ♪ ♪ And to Jesus Christ, our Savior ♪ ♪ And to the Holy Spirit ♪ (congregation sings) ♪ As it was 'ere time began ♪ (congregation sings)

- This reading is from the 16th chapter of the Gospel according to Saint John. Beginning with the 12th verse, Jesus speaks to his disciples. "I still have many things to say to you, "but you cannot bear them now. "When the spirit of truth comes, "He will guide you into all the truth. "For he will not speak on his own, "But he will speak whatever he hears. "And he will declare to you the things that are to come. "He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine, "and declare it to you. "All that the Father has is mine. "For this reason I said that he will take what is mine, "and declare it to you." This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God. (lively organ music) (choir sings)

- The lesson from the Epistle is in the 5th chapter of the letter to the Church at Rome. "Therefore having been justified by faith, "We have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. "Through him also we have obtained our introduction by faith "into this grace wherein we stand. "And we exalt in hope of the glory of God. "Not only this, but we also exalt in our tribulations, "Knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance, "And perseverance proven character. "And proven character, hope. "And hope does not disappoint or cheat us. "Because the love of God has been "poured out within our hearts through "the Holy Spirit, who is given to us. This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

- In 1971, a British dairy farmer sold his entire operation: cattle, equipment, farm; and with his family, set out to sail around the world. He was able to purchase a decent sized, and well-equipped ship, and after considerable preparation, followed in the steps of many British mariners who went down to the sea in ships. Accompanied by his wife and three sons, and a teenage friend of his oldest son, the farmer allowed for a full year's time to complete their journey. Their venture into a different kind of education for both children and the parents. I can appreciate the decision to get away from the dairy farm. Growing up on a farm myself, milking cows by hand, keeping the relentless seven day a week schedule, I often fantasied other, clearly more exciting alternatives to that drudgery. But I don't think I ever imagined sailing around the world. I too much identified with the ancient Jews and their discomfort with the ocean, its vast expanse and its fathomless depths. Quite frankly, I would have been too afraid to imagine that. From my viewpoint, this was

an exercise in either extraordinary courage, or foolhardiness, I'm not sure which. But it turned out to be much more than either. The first leg of the journey was uneventful, but exciting. Demanding, but satisfying. In and out of different ports, the challenge of the high seas an invigorating experience. A goodly time into the trip, they set sail on a longer than usual stint between ports. Early into this part of their journey, they met with disaster. One night, they were literally run over by a herd of killer whales, at least that's what they later concluded. Now the whales meant them no harm. They simply were in the wrong place at the wrong time, and came out much the loser. The ship was so badly damaged and began so quickly to sink, that they could scarcely escape with their lives. They managed to get off that vessel into their inflatable life raft, with only a few provisions: a bag of onions, a few lemons, a knife, a very few other essentials. Along with this inflatable raft, they had a small dinghy that they had used for exploring while they were in port. There they were, adrift in the middle of the Pacific Ocean with very few resources by which to sustain themselves and survive. I can remember reading this story for the first time and became aware of how my level of horrified fascination began to rise. It is enough to be on the ocean in a seaworthy vessel, but cast adrift in a tiny life raft, that's something else. I saw more clearly why they had entitled their story "Survived the Savage Sea". But survive they did, and they were rescued 37 days later by a Japanese freighter. All of them in reasonably good physical and mental shape. However, as Paul Harvey would say, "There is the rest of the story." We'll get back to that in a moment. First, let's return to our New Testament lesson in Paul's letter to the Church at Rome. The passage read just a moment ago concluded with an unlikely connection of life events and phenomena, which came together in the form of hope. Suffering leads to endurance, endurance leads to character, and character produces hope. Moreover, writes Paul, he rejoices in suffering as the starting point for the development of this hope, which does not disappoint, or as some translate it, put to shame, or as others, cheat us. That simply will not find much approval in our world today, which is often preoccupied, if not obsessed, with avoiding suffering, rather than enduring it. Hope for us, is fixed upon not having to suffer. When suffering and pain come, as they inevitably do, we feel betrayed. What we have held on to as hope vanishes as we feel emptiness, which probably is more the true opposite of hope than anything else. That great, empty chasm inside. Place alongside that a later statement, just a few chapters over into this letter, in which Paul rather cryptically states "For in hope we have been saved, "But hope that is seen is not hope. "For why does one also hope for what he sees? "But if we hope for what we do not see, "With perseverance, we wait eagerly for it." Is this more of Paul's verbal antics in which he stretches paradox beyond its limits to something more like a kind of confusing double talk? To read some of the commentaries, you might wonder since they offer little in the way of clarification. I must admit to my own bewilderment as to what he meant. However, there is one possibility which makes some sense to me. If as Paul sees it, there is a hope which does not disappoint, does not cheat, there may well be a hope which does. Could it be that a primary difference between the two hopes is that one cannot be seen, the other can? Could it be that the hope you can see is really kind of a counterfeit hope, one which will put its holder to shame which will make promises it can never deliver, in other words, will cheat you? The real hope, the hope that is central in the Christian faith, is one you cannot see. It is a hope which happens only when the situation and life seem hopeless. If that seems to be only more double talk, this time the Travis variety, let me draw upon a recent work by Christopher Lasch, in an attempt to clarify what I'm talking about. This was a book published last year and reviewed recently in "The Christian Century". It was entitled "The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics" This is a formidable challenge for a books, its range of history, culture and politics, and its merciless scrutiny of the assumptions of Progressive Liberalism, namely that scientific knowledge and moral fervor

could light the path to truth and justice. In this book, and important distinction for Lasch, is that distinction between what he calls optimism and hope. While this is not a commentary on Romans, the distinction has an uncanny similarity to my earlier point. According to Lasch, believers in progress who still cling to that wistful hope against hope, that things will somehow work out for the best, they operate out of a context of optimism, this he calls improvidence, a kind of blind faith. This optimism rests more on confidence in the future, what lies ahead, than in the past. There is a sense that somehow history is slowly but surely moving towards peace and justice. As Lasch says, "Though they like to think of themselves "as the party of hope, actually these "believers in progress have little need for hope." Maybe that is, because to go back to the apostle's words, "They think they can see their destiny coming toward them, unmarred by tragedy or suffering." The truth is, they are in big time denial of life's tragic character. The promises of this optimism are forever being broken or postponed, because human life and history simply do not oblige this kind of hope. Hope that is seen is not hope. But then as Lasch continues, there are the hopeful. Those who live with a deep seated trust in life that appears absurd to others who do not have this kind of hope. In this sense, hope rests on confidence more in the past, than in the future. Coming from early memories, even memories which as we've grown up, have become distorted. Those memories in which the experience of order and contentment were so intense that subsequent disillusionments cannot dislodge it. This real hope becomes a powerful conviction, not that the past was better than the present, but that trust is never completely misplaced, even though it may never be completed justified either. There will be disappointments, this is acknowledged. This hope, rather than preventing us from expecting the worst, actually prepares us for it, and equips us with, as he put it "The disposition to see things through "even when they don't work out for the best." But this is not a morbid and passive resignation to life's disappointments. The response of the three young Hebrews, who were threatened with incineration in a fiery furnace if they did not fall down and worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, captures this tension. Hear the words they reportedly said to the king, "If it be so, our God whom we serve "is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire. "And he will deliver us out of your hand, oh King. "But even if he does not, let it be known to you, "oh King, that we are not going to serve your gods, "or worship the golden image which you have set up." This hope does not cheat us. But it may yet come clearer, if we move from these written documents, back to the living, human documents, and revisit our story of the British farm family, who took to the high seas, faced disaster, and survived. Certainly it didn't happen as simply as I told it a moment ago. What about the rest of the story? Well it goes like this: After it became clear that they were not in any immediate danger, the dairy farmer surveyed the situation and concluded that their chances were pretty good. The inflatable raft was seaworthy. They had the dinghy for spare. Although their provisions were limited, they did have enough to survive for several days. Most importantly, they were in the primary shipping lanes in that part of the Pacific Ocean, and that surely meant that soon they would be spotted by a passing ship, and then would be rescued. He communicated this to his wife and the children, and they set about to be as comfortable as they could while waiting to be rescued. The currents seemed to be pulling them along rather strongly, but for the moment, that did not seem to be a pressing problem. They even began to imagine the kind of stories they would have to tell their family and friends back in England, when they returned. The next few days were uncomfortable to say the least. Rationing their provisions was frustrating. The close company was aggravating, sometimes embarrassing, and so it was with an incredible surge of relief when on the 7th day, they spotted a freighter on the horizon. Excitement soared; they readied their flare gun, and the dot on the horizon grew larger. Then to their utter dismay, disbelief and shock, the smoke of the freighter thinned, the

ship began to disappear. The burst of their flare gun apparently had gone unnoticed, and within moments, the ship had totally vanished from the horizon. Apparently the currents had pulled them far out of the central part of these shipping lanes, but even if they had known that earlier, they had no means to alter their direction. No sail, no motor, no power. There they were, adrift at the mercy of the ocean, powerless. Shock gave way to anger, anger gave way to terror, and terror gave way to apathy. Out of the primary path of passing ships, provisions almost exhausted, little means of protecting themselves from the harsh elements, they would surely perish. Nothing they could do would make a difference. Their hopes for rescue had been dashed. They felt betrayed and clearly no optimism would carry them to safety. The father particularly felt the burden, the awful burden of having placed his family in this situation. He was overcome with a great sense of shame that his incompetence, his foolhardiness, his worthlessness in this situation had gotten them to this point. They would all die; it would be his fault. Then, in some way, not readily explained, he, and with his leadership, his family, made a change. He swore to himself that he would die trying, if it took that, to bring his family to safety. He worked to convince his wife and sons that even without the likelihood of a ship's rescue, they yet could survive the sea, if they remembered that they had trained for this trip. They had prepared even for similar kind of eventualities, where they might be in a crisis. They certainly were no strangers to grueling labor and long hours. They had their faith and they had each other. Putting all their knowledge and skills together they could make a difference, at least a day at a time. For the next 30 days, they did just that. Furthermore, they abandoned the wishful thought that they would be rescued by some passing ship. In other words, if we go back to Lasch's terms, they replaced their initial optimism with hope. They took what they thought they could see as the prospect for rescue and safety, and they replaced that with an awareness that this was a port beyond which they could not see. They could only have some hope that by their strength and God's grace, they could survive from day to day. Folks, if we take this story as a modern parable of hope, we must not dismiss the horrors which they endured, and the ever present possibility that they would perish. They suffered through scorching sun, through agonizing thirst. They dealt with the dangers of vicious sharks and fierce storms. They encountered the sea on its own terms, and found ways to wrestle food and fresh water from its stingy elements. Just when it seemed that they had this survival thing in hand, their inflatable raft began to leak. Finally, it was beyond repair or bailing out, and they had to abandon it to crowd all of them into this small dinghy. Their hope took many fierce beatings, but they endured. That endurance undergirded their brave resolve not to give up, even when it appeared for certain that the sea had finally triumphed. A modern parable of hope. Now we may need to ask, is there a word for us today in this story, or in Paul's statements, ever how cryptic they may have been to the Church at Rome. If there is, it may take the form of affirming yet disquieting questions. Will you and I challenge our optimistic preoccupation with only that which we can see or think we can see? Will we come to terms with the limits of our lives and our world? Will we risk a hope that is not seen? Is hope truly possible only when there seems to be no hope? Will we evoke and lay hold on those powerful memories which as Lasch wrote, "Leave as their residue an unshakeable conviction "that life may be trusted even "in the face of disappointments." May such memories be cast in the form of ordinary human moments, which even in their ordinariness yet reflect that one who is for us. That one who, as Paul also wrote, "While we were yet sinners, died for us." But I want to leave you with more than just questions. I want to call you to remember, to draw on your memories of God's presence and grace in your lives, ever how much that may have been in disguise. For that, I borrow the words of a friend's benediction. "Depart now in the fellowship of God the Father, "and as you go, remember. "In the goodness of God, you were born into this world. "By the grace of God, you

have been kept "all the day long, even until this hour, "and by the love of God, fully revealed "in the face of Jesus, you are being redeemed." In the name of God the Creator, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen. (joyful organ music) (congregation sings)

- [Asst. Dean Brazzel] The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Let us pray. Oh God our Creator, when we look at the heavens, at the work of your hands, the moon and the stars, the mountains and the oceans, the forests and the gardens, the birds and the beasts, we are astounded that you are mindful of us, that you have entrusted your creation to our care, and that you have chosen us as heirs to your kingdom. There is so much we have to be grateful for. A world where everything needed for life to thrive is provided. People in our lives who have loved us, and cared for us, experiences that have left us marveling at the wonder of life, the beauty of a mountaintop, the birth of a child, amazing grace that we did not deserve, unexpected success, the joy of friendship, the healing power of laughter. We are grateful for these things and so many more, which we name in our hearts. Sometimes Lord, we must confess that we lose sight of all the things that we have to celebrate about life. We lose our hope in the essential trustworthiness of life, as we are pulled down into despair, through the experiences of life that cause us suffering. We lift up these experiences to you and ask for your healing touch, for illnesses that we are powerless to prevent, for tragedies that strike unexpectedly, for the loss of loved ones, for the loneliness and emptiness we feel, for betrayals we have experienced, for the pain we've caused when we have been the betrayers, for the mess we've made of our environment, as we fail to live as responsible stewards of your creation, for the suffering we've caused through our self-centeredness and callousness toward those in need, for the uncertainty and fear we feel about the future. It is easy for us to become overwhelmed by our own suffering, and the suffering we see around us, for life so often disappoints our optimistic expectations. Yet, dear God, our Father and Mother, help us lift our eyes to you, from whom our help comes, and the only true hope in life. Remind us that as the Creator of all that is, you have the power to renew life. As the Son, you became fully human, and you fully assumed our pain, our suffering, our failure, our loneliness, even our betrayal, to transform them, to bring new life where before there had been only death. As the ever present Spirit, you have given us your sustaining love and power, and you remind us that life is not as it seems. The status quo does not have the last word. For we know that you are working in the world to recreate it, as you are working to recreate us into the image of Christ. Our hope is in your power and in your love. For we know that there is no greater power, and no greater love in all the heavens, and in all the earth, and this is a hope we can count on, a hope that has been proven trustworthy in the past, a hope that can be relied on today. A hope which gives us courage to face whatever suffering tomorrow might bring. Knowing you use all things to work for good, of those who love you. This is a hope that will not cheat, that will never betray us. We give you thanks for our hope to live by, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. God has placed all things under our feet. That responsibility to care for all creation calls for our daily commitment to reach out with helping hands. Let us celebrate that commitment with our offering. (cheerful organ music) (choir sings) (majestic organ music) (congregation sings) Let us pray. Loving Creator, we bring these symbols of our stewardship, seeking your blessing on all the work we do. Grant us the depth of character, truly to appreciate and care for all you have made. We dedicate to your service our time, our

talent, and all the riches we accumulate. May what we share here be well used in ministry to one another, and in outreach to those who are suffering in our community, Amen. In the name of Christ, let us pray together the Lord's Prayer.

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 us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, Amen. Let all who suffer, hear and rejoice. Through the love of God and Jesus Christ, we are empowered to bear all things, believe all things, endure all things, hope all things. This great hope shall not disappoint, for love has been poured into our hearts through the Spirit, and nothing can separate us from the Love of God. Go forth giving thanks, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. ♪ Hallelujah Amen Amen ♪ (organ music) (congregation sings)