Good morning. Welcome to the service of worship on Christ the King Sunday and homecoming. We are glad to have any alumni back, particularly those here for our Medical Alumni Weekend. We give you a warm welcome back to Duke Chapel. We also remind you that tonight at 7 o'clock here in the chapel something that has become a tradition, the annual Messiah sing along. And, you're invited to come to that very special event. Let us stand for the greeting. Praise the Lord all nations. (congregation responds)

The Lord's steadfast love toward us is great. (congregation responds) (organ music) (congregation singing)

Let us pray. Oh mighty God, who gave your son Jesus Christ a realm where all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. Make us loyal followers of our living Lord that we may always hear his word, follow his teachings and live in his spirit. And hasten the day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to your eternal glory, 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 your words with joy this day, Amen.

The Old Testament reading is taken from 2 Samuel chapter 23. "Now these are the last words of David, the oracle of David, son of Jesse, the oracle of the man whom God exalted, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the favorite of the strong one of Israel. The spirit of the Lord speaks through me, His word is upon my tongue. The God of Israel has spoken. the Rock of Israel has said to me one who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land. Is not my house like this with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. Will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire. But the Godless are like thorns that are thrown away for they cannot be picked up with the hand, to touch them one uses an iron bar or the shaft of a spear and they are entirely consumed in fire on the spot. This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

Today's Psalm is number 132 found on page on 849 and 50 in your hymnal. Please stand and sing the Psalm and Gloria responsively. (organ music) ♪ Oh Lord in David's favor ♪ Remember all the hardships he endured ♪ How he swore to the the Lord ♪ And vowed to the mighty one of Jacob ♪ (congregation sings) ♪ I will not give sleep to my eyes ♪ Or slumber to my eyelids ♪ (congregation sings) ♪ The Lord swore to David ♪ As your oath ♪ And from it will not turn back. ♪ (congregation sings) ♪ If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies ♪ Which I shall teach them ♪ (congregation sings) ♪ ♪ For the Lord has
chosen Zion ♪ ♪ And has desired it for God's habitation ♪ (congregation sings) ♪ I will abundantly bless it's provisions ♪ ♪ I will satisfy it's poor with bread ♪ (congregation sings) ♪ There I will make honor sprout for David ♪ ♪ I have prepared a lamp for my anointed ♪ (congregation sings) ♪ All glory be to you Creator ♪ ♪ And to Jesus Christ our Savior ♪ (congregation sings) ♪ As it was ere time began ♪ (congregation sings)

- You may be seated.

- The Gospel reading is from the book of John, chapter 18. "Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus and asked him, are you the King of the Jews? Jesus answered, my kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews, but as it is, my kingdom is not from here. Pilate asked him, so, you are a king? Jesus answered, you say that I am a king, for this I was born, and for this I came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God. (choir sings)

- The epistle from Revelation. "Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was, and who is to come, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead. Ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us, and has freed us from our sin by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom of priests serving his God and Father. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen. Look, he is coming with clouds, every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be, Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. This is the word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

- The reporter was interviewing the attorney who had just represented his client and had succeeded. An award of over a million dollars from the McDonald's restaurant. His client had just received this award after having been burned by a cup of coffee she was holding in her knees as she drove her car out of the restaurant. The attorney was defending the judgment. And at the end of the interview the reporter asked the attorney, "Is this what you went to law school for?" Ah yes, how the glorious ideal of jurisprudenceshrinks in our hands. The idealistic young medical student called into medicine to save lives, to heal brokenness, becomes the expert in the facelift and the tummy tuck. How the grand nobility of the healing arts shrinks in our hands. Today's scripture, though this Christ the King, is a weird unmanageable word from a weird book of the Bible, Revelation. Jesus Christ, ruler of kings of the earth, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, Almighty God. How different that exclamation from a recent Doonesbury cartoon, which depicts a disappointed yuppie looking couple leaving church, where they have been shocked to hear an otherwise progressive preacher refer to sin. And they say to one another, "We're just looking for a church where we can feel good about ourselves." And the grand scale of the Gospel shrinks. A group of students in the dormitory prayer group sit around in a circle and they pray, and one prays, "Lord, we know that you just want us to bring our needs before you, Lord, keep me cool, during my orgo exam." another prays, "Lord we know that you care about what we care about, be with my family this weekend while they're on vacation at
the beach." Now some of you alums can remember the Doctor Norman Vincent Peele, and his Power of Positive Thinking. God rendered into the great shrink in the sky. Twenty years ago Phillip Rife wrote the Triumph of the Therapeutic. Twenty years ago Rife predicted the day when in our modern psychologically saturated American hands, the Christian faith would be rendered into something small, salvation will become therapy, church will become theater, sermons as psychodrama, and no prophet to denounce the idle rich, Rife said. How in the world did Phillip Rife foresee the death grip of the therapeutic embrace upon the Christian faith? Last year Yale's Wendy Kaminer wrote a wickedly funny book about the 12 step self help therapy craze, Kaminer's book is entitled "I'm dysfunctional, you're dysfunctional." (congregation laughs) and Kaminer presents Doctor Joyce Brothers, as the guru of all self-helpers. In Doctor Brother's best selling book, entitled "How to get whatever you want out of life" Doctor Brothers combines the power of positive thinking with pop psychology in a best selling primer on making dreams come true. Doctor Brothers says "Only you can truly know what you want to get out of life." and presumably only Doctor Brothers can teach you how to get it. Quote, "A lover, power, riches, success, a good marriage, exciting sex, fulfillment, these can all be yours, if you buy this book." A book can make all the difference Doctor Brothers says. She dresses up her platitudes and pep talks with case studies, with, quote, scientific insights. One of her scientific insights is the quick list technique, quote, "write down your three top wishes, just fast as you can, without any reflection," just like a fairy godmother. But Doctor Brothers is a scientist, and she says the quick list technique is a powerful, scientifically proved tool, and as proof of the quick list technique's potency, Doctor Brothers reports the case of Norman. Norman was a middle level manager, but after using the quick list technique he was transformed into, quote, "the proud owner of a metallic silver sports car with red leather upholstery." Your wish list should be quite specific, she says. (congregation snickers) And Brothers' advice is quite specific too, in her collection of psychological techniques she devises a study schedule to improve yourself. Listen up students, quote, "Eat a light supper, start working at 6:15, stop working at 8:30 for half an hour, during this half an hour have a cup of decaffeinated coffee or very weak tea, an apple, please, no alcohol." another learning technique of Doctor Brothers is always study in a cool room. Quote, "science has shown that mental activity thrives in a chilly atmosphere, keep the room on the cool side. I have found it best between 60 and 65 degrees, is most conducive for learning." Brothers also shares one of her own study secrets, she says "I have written most of this book while flying on airplanes." If you read it, you will believe that. (congregation laughs) Now, if such silliness were limited to folk who watch the Phil Donahue show, or read Psychology today, it would be harmless, but it's in the church. A recent study by Gallup shows that the majority of us Americans, when we think about God, we tend to think of God as being intensely pleased with us. God affirms us, enjoys being with us, and God is never displeased by us or our actions. University of Virginia sociologist James Hunter went back and reviewed 30 years of novels by Evangelical Christian authors, and noted a change. Over the past thirty years, Evangelical Christian novels, Hunter shows, forsook the traditional Christian Evangelical themes of sin, and redemption from sin and salvation, and instead dealt with therapy for personal problems. This summer there was a book by Princeton's Marcia Whitten, entitled, All Is Forgiven. Whitten took 30 recent sermons by Baptist and Presbyterian pastors, on the Prodigal Son. She found that the language of secular psychological therapy is much more influential in these sermons, than Biblical language. Both liberal and conservative Christians, demonstrates Whitten, have jettisoned biblical language for psychotherapeutic babble. We come to church as consumers, picking and choosing the most helpful spirituality. Church as another supermarket of desire with no external source of authority, with nothing to help us stand against the omnivorous ego. There is no check against our
human tendencies toward self-deceit and self deception. The church, which used psychology as a tool to communicate the Gospel, lost the Gospel. We are finding that counseling and psychotherapy are not neutral techniques. Inseparable from their ends. The Gospel has different ends, it moves towards different goals than therapy. Having lost the language of the Gospel, we lose the Gospel. This first was demonstrated to me in reading Robert Bellah's popular Habits of the Heart. Bellah says that we Americans used to have three languages through which we grasp the world. The Biblical, the republican, and the individual. We once had three ways of describing what was going on. We had the individual, this is the Emersonian language of self reliance and self focus. We had the republican, by which Bellah means the language of civic virtue, the language of politics and public morality. And we had Biblical language, meaning the language of Biblical symbol and Christian metaphor. In Habits of the Heart, Bellah says, we have lost all languages now, save the individual. When we now speak about our problems, we speak only in the dialect of self help and human potential. And therapeutic language has proved to be too weak to carry the freight, if you want to see the weakness, of therapeutic language hitched to the burden of the Gospel, tune in on Sunday morning with Robert Chuler, and I think you will find the frail, failing attempt of purely psychological individualistic language to carry the magnificence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Be Happy attitudes. We've lost our language, and we're impoverished. Why are you here this morning? Of course if Bellah is right, you may be unable adequately theologically to describe why you're here. You may say the only thing the culture teaches you to say, you're here for a little help to make it through the week. You're here looking for some personal affirmation to pump up your self esteem. Because that's the only language we've given you to name that for which you yearn. But maybe you're here for more. Maybe you're here to grapple intellectually with larger matters, maybe. Tom Long of Princeton, who preaches frequently from this pulpit, recalled an experience when he was a young pastor, he was just fresh out of seminary, he had a family in his church that had a son who had cerebral palsy. And Tom says that when he visited that family, it was as if the whole family moved and talked, that young man stood in the shadows and watched. One day the mother called him, to come over to the house and he went, and there she told him about what had happened to her the day before. She said that she was knitting, in the late afternoon, just as the shadows were lengthening, her son was standing, as he often did, in the shadows down at the end of the hall. She said there was some sort of stir in the room, and she looked up, she looked down the hall, and there was her son, in the late afternoon sunlight and Jesus was standing beside him. With his arm embracing the boy. She said "I looked away, and I looked again, and there was only John standing there. And for the first time in my life, I know that my son John is already healed in the power of God." Now Long says, "I don't know what happened there that afternoon, but I do know what the two of us did with it." I'll tell you what she did with it, she turned that personal spiritual experience into something large, something ethical, something almost cosmic. If you go to that town in New Jersey today, you will find programs in place for disabled kids, which that woman has begun on the energy, the insight created out of that vision. She turned that personal experience into a changed world. But Tom said, "What I did as her pastor, fortunately, I only did internally. I had just gotten out of a pastoral psychology course in seminary, so I started psychologising her. I said to myself, she's probably dealing with her grief over her disabled child, she's turning her anger away from the situation, she's projecting her psychic needs onto these religious images." Tom says, "Notice what I did. I reduced an experience in which she used theological language to describe, into the more socially acceptable language of psychology, because it made it easier for me to manage." As sociologist Peter Berger has put it, "the delegitimizing forces of this culture make people doubt
their own experience. They begin to hide religious experience even from themselves. They are hungry for a theological vocabulary. We want a larger way to make sense." Today in the Church, it's Christ the King. And you have noted that all of today's scriptures speaks in some fashion, and the hymns, of Christ as king. As Alpha and Omega, beginning and end. The one who is, and who was and is yet to come. The one who sits upon the throne of Heaven, ruler of the kings of the earth. The language is bold and it's weird and it's pushy and it's unmanageable. Large, to signal us that what we're about here, is larger than the purely personal, it's cosmic! Because you see what ails us, that for which we yearn is not just personal, it's political, it's systemic. It's cosmic. I know a student, when she came here she was very unhappy her first year, she suffered from an eating disorder, she had numerous social problems, she was miserable. Her sophomore year she took a course in our women's studies department, and at the end of that course she said to me, "In that course I've learned skills of analysis, I've learned history, I've learned a critical view of the world. All my life people have been telling me, "you're unhappy, it must be some kind of personal problem, there must be something wrong with you." But maybe this thing is systemic, maybe it's large, it's economic, it's historical, it's gender related, my problem isn't just me, it's bigger than that." I think that was a kind of profoundly politically Christian point of view. Your need is greater than for a better positive self image. Narcissism rationalized with a religious tint. You need a new heaven and a new earth. I think you're here for that. We need to know that there's a force for good loose in the world. The same force that flung the planets in their courses and moves the earth. Jesus isn't our therapist. He is Alpha and Omega, ruler of kings of the earth. Christ the king reminds us, Jesus doesn't just promise us a better me, a slightly improved you. We shall have a new world, Jesus shall reign! (organ music) (congregation sings)

- The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you

- Let us pray, you may be seated. Oh mighty Lord, King of kings, ruler of creation, who reigns over all things, we bow before you in glad adoration. For you are Lord of lords, God of gods, the Alpha and the Omega. The beginning and the end. Who are we that you are mindful of us. Sheltering us, yea gently sustaining. Your goodness and mercy daily attend us, you are the hope of our salvation. Let all that is within us praise the Lord. Lord in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

- Forgive us for belittling you by treating you as the great therapist in the sky, rather than the Lord of life and death. Remind us that you want to do more than build our self esteem, you want to give us new life. Open our hearts not simply to be touched, but transformed by your purifying grace. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

- Save us from our self centered tendencies. Remind us that Jesus came, not just to save me and you, but the whole world. Open our eyes to see the signs of the new heaven and the new earth that are being born in our midst. Help us become agents of your new creation. Lord in your mercy,
All: Hear our prayer.

- Bestow upon the whole Church that passionate desire for the coming of your kingdom which will unite all Christians in one mission to the world. Sanctify it's life, renew it's worship, empower it's witness, restore it's unity. Lord in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

- Grant that all the people of the earth now divided by the power of sin, may be united under the glorious and gentle rule of Jesus Christ, free us from war, hatred and violence. And show us the way of peace and love. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

- Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil, and to make no peace with oppression, that we may reverently use our freedom and employ it in the maintenance of justice to the glory of your holy name. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

- Send your healing spirit on the created order that it might be restored to the beauty and intricate wholeness that you intended. Teach us to honor and respect what you have made, and to tread lightly upon this earth. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

- Fill us with compassion for others' troubles even as we have received abundant compassion and mercy from you, remind us that our hope and their hope reside in the power and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who rules the heavens and the earth, and in whom all things are possible. For it is in his name that we pray, Amen. We dare to give because we know that all we have has been given to us by the Lord of creation. Our gifts are signs of our gratitude, but God wants more than that. God wants everything we have and everything we are. As we bring our gifts to the altar, may they also serve as the sign of our total commitment to the new life that God offers us through Jesus Christ. (organ music) (choir sings) (organ music) ♪ Praise God from whom all blessings flow ♪ ♪ Praise God all creatures here below ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia, ♪ ♪ Praise God among ye heavenly hosts ♪ ♪ Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪

- Let us pray, almighty God, giver of every good and perfect gift, teach us to render to you all that we have and all that we are. That we may praise you, not with our lips only, but with our whole lives. Turning the duties, the sorrows and the joys of all our days into a living sacrifice to you. Through our Savior and King, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray together saying,
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. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen. (organ music) (congregation sings)

- The grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (choir sings)