

(choir sings) (organ music) (choir sings)

- Almighty God, we, the disciples of the risen Lord, make these offerings for thy service. Praying that as the resurrection of Jesus Christ brought new life and hope to all mankind. So may these offerings remind the world and impress the world that Christ is alive for all of them in his name, amen. (soft organ music) In the name of the eternal God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, amen. The Lord is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. So the church throughout the ages has acclaimed the message of Easter and its splendor in the victory of Jesus. But in the joy of that victory, we have too often, I think, forgotten the full significance of Easter's message. We have stopped with the idea of the living presence of the Lord with us, each one of us and in his church, but we have too often neglected the sequels to it. By which alone, I think the apostolic band was able to undertake the colossal task of evangelizing the world. It is with those sequels, that I want to be concerned today and the weekends, because they are of enormous relevance to our present situation and opportunity. In this amazing day of the Lord, when for the first time, the vision of the ages of a worldwide human family could be, indeed must be brought to fruition. We cannot afford to neglect the two consequences which flow from Easter. The first to them of course, is the revelation to the disciples that this Jesus, whom they had known as companion, and teacher, master and prophet, Messiah, and gift of God, was much more than that. That he was not just one more the last and greatest in a succession of messengers, though he held that place. But that he had for them, and as they came for the world, the eternal value of the divine. That is of course the meaning of what we commemorated ascension tied. When they saw the glory of God transfiguring and fulfilling the presence of Jesus. That is the first sequel. And the second is of course that which happened at Pentecost. The consequent development, the consequent emergence, as we might say, in the group of the apostles of a new kind of community, a community of which it could truly be said that the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul. Now those two consequences represent the answer which the church can give to the two supreme needs of our day and generation. No one could spend as my wife and I have spent the last three months since Christmas in the city of Brussels without realizing the total bewilderment, not to say the total bankruptcy of European statesmanship. And anyone who takes the future of the world seriously must find it almost impossible to predict what will be the position of that world, even of the western alliance in the next six months. We have lost what, when I was last in this place, five years ago, Walter Lippmann had taught us to call a public philosophy. We have not got a coherent outlook upon the world, neither churches nor sexual societies, neither art nor music, neither ethics nor sex, neither philosophy nor religion, has a coherent philosophy. And we are at the mercy of bright ideas in religion, plenty of them in the world, it's almost universal bright ideas but no consistent and generally acknowledged compass bearings for our course. Now that is what the early church claimed to have discovered when they had reflected upon the impact which Jesus made upon his contemporaries. They had seen him give life and life abundant. They had seen him exemplify the great law of sacrifice life by life laid down. And they were coming to experience the life which is life indeed, the knowledge of God and to this Christ. Yes, they had received a new outlook. You can trace the sequel, the two sequels in the book of the Acts. But I would rather trace it in the life history of the apostle St. Paul. Because

of course of all the figures in the Bible, St. Paul is the one whom we know best. The one who is incomparably revealed to us in the series of his letters. We can see how a real man facing this situation of the death and resurrection, and continued influence of Jesus reacted to it. That is why I would take as a text this morning, the first verse of the lesson, which was read to us. In the fifth chapter of the second letter to the Corinthians. Words written when St. Paul had passed, far beyond his first conversion experience. To the great achievement of his career when he came to Corinth. And so could write, "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation. The old is gone. Rather it has become new, and all things old and new are God, who has reconciled us unto himself in Christ Jesus, and given unto us ministry of reconciliation. A new creation." That is what we in the church, no longer appear to be able to recognize. This complete novelty of outlook, which the Christian faith rightly understood and faithfully practiced, must involve. St. Paul had seen himself, how the event of the resurrection had challenged his way of life, had broken his career, had transformed his whole outlook, so that no longer was Jesus to him via person to God But he acclaimed and glorified of God. He had experienced that transformation, and had taken time in Arabia, in Antioch, in Tarsus. And on his first journey in Galatia to work out the significance of it. But in spite of recognizing the contrast between old and new in his letter to the Galatians. And receiving those flashes of insight, which come through that amazing letter, "I live, yet not I, Christ lives in me. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is it male or female." He could say that and we can't. We can't say neither American nor Chinaman. We don't say it. He could. So soon after his conversion, and then love and joy, peace and courage, mercy and virtue coupling the new Christian virtues as we call them, love, and joy, and peace. With the old pagan virtues, fortitude, virtus as the Romans called it. But in spite of his flashes of genius, he was still a long way from realizing the stupendous thing that he learned through his failure in what was, I suppose the most remarkable of all the invasions of Europe from Asia. Is there anything so effective among various movements as the occasion when the Greek doctor and the Jewish evangelist, science and religion of the time hand in hand, set out from Samothrace to come to Philippi to invade the new western continent where it started badly. You remember he stood on his dignity in Philippi And to stand on your dignity is to assume one of the only positions in which a man cannot conceivably see God. Some of us might do well to remember that. Fatal, they have cast us and condemned into prison, being Romans. Would they throw us out secretly? Let them come themselves and fetch us out. That's not a very high level of Christian achievement. And it was followed by his proclamation of a crude Jewish apocalyptic, a person in Nicaea preaching one Jesus, a king who should come from heaven at a time when all the Roman world was wondering what would happen when Claudius died? Well he aroused riots, which he had to write two good letters to restrain. Went on to Athens and tried to turn himself into a dawn. Preaching a sort of university sermon on the text, we are also his offspring. And receiving what academic audiences are apt to give, nothing but mockery. And so he went to Corinth humbled. And learned the amazing lesson, which he expressed in the familiar words. It is the Jews who are a God for miracle and a God of power. It is the Greeks who are beset with the idea of wisdom. We preach of God in terms of a man on a cross, in terms of the love that suffers to the utmost. That is of course a scandal to the Jews, and mockery to the Greeks. But to those who come under its spell, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. He saw, you see, that if Jesus was like God, then God must be like Jesus. And he set himself to rethink the images, of power and wisdom, the universal provider and the Lord of the earth. And even I think the king of the religious mysteries, in terms of the oldest and simplest of all human relationships, the thing that really distinguishes man from the animals, in terms of the family, our father. And consequent, to revolutionize his whole way of proceeding, he must no

longer huckster the gospel. He must no longer think in terms as a power and wisdom. He must be content with the building of what he could only call agape, the unable word for which love is our nearest but our remote translation. And so he came, you see, to see how if the old had passed, nevertheless, it had given rise to the new. Because in old and new alike was God. God reconciling the world to himself. A great philosopher, Teilhard, Teilhard de Chardin, the French paleontologist paleontologist and seer has literally revived a word used by biologist in my younger days, the word convergence to indicate exactly what St. Paul means by reconciliation. This coming together into a solid and organic community of those who share the same loyalty. Express that loyalty in the same activities. And so find among themselves the most intimate kind of partnership. That we shall speaker on weekends. Today I just want to finish by reminding you of the novelty with which we should approach the things of our faith. Jesus had set us the example. In his first utterance the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is upon you. Change your outlook and believe the good news. The good news of God's kingdom. We don't believe in one world, do we? At least we blessedly accept two, if not three or for our 50 worlds. We don't believe in one world, although we profess to believe that the world is God's world. We believe in two worlds and try fitfully to find a place in both of them. Trying to ride two horses which in fact are proceeding fairly rapidly in different directions. No wonder we don't make much of a success either of secular or of religious affairs. And we are not making much of a success of them at present, are we? Jesus, you see set himself to disabuse men of the idea that to the welfare state command these stones that they be made bread was the right basis for a community. And he regarded the stockpiling of armaments as merely diabolical. No doubt about that, that was sacred. And I think he also regarded the paraphernalia of religion as not his way. He would not exploit the Lord his God by casting himself down, and appearing as the Jews expected the Messiah to appear in the courts of the temple. On the contrary, He told men and women to open their eyes and see God in his world. And he began with flowers and birds and little children at play. And women sweeping houses and baking bread. And men sewing fields and searching for pearls. And said, do you see, do you see the many splendor thing? Do you see the glory in the midst of you, in the common ways of common folk, there is the kingdom. You needn't fly away to the beyond. You needn't to descend into the heavens. You needn't delve into the earth, Heaven and hell are poor metaphors for Christian. Here in the midst is God, doing his eternal work. Bringing good out of evil, challenging the pride of man. Because the first effect of his configuring vision upon the disciples was to make them ask which of them was the greatest? What privilege do we have? What can I get out of this? They went up to Jerusalem arguing you remember, about seats on the right hand, and seats on the left. So they had to be broken into life by way of betrayal. Think of how often we say to others, "Depart from us we are holier than thou." How often we claim to be the only free people in the world. God forgive us for our misunderstanding of what freedom means. Think of it, of the humbling that it means. If we are to escape crucifying the son of God of flesh, and putting him and ourselves to a perpetual shape. Well, they had begun to learn that lesson as please God, after two world wars and this constant reign of fear and suspicion we are beginning to discover that that is not the road. It is God's world. And the movements towards a larger understanding of that fact, are plain for all who have eyes to see. To me, at least, the movements of sounds in the last 10 years, indeed in the last 50 years have been full of an indisputable encouragement. And the movements within the churches, the ecumenical are council of the churches, and the Vatican council and the noble and cyclical of Pope John. These things beckon us in the direction, which St. Paul had proclaimed. Be ye ambassadors for God. That is the task of this great people. To be ambassadors for the prince of peace. And in doing so, to disclose once more to the world, the fullness and the splendor of Jesus. To say again, to

the world as the Victorian poet said. I say the acknowledgement of God in Christ accepted by thy reason, solves that the all problems in the earth and outreach. And has so far advance thee to be wise. We have a great gospel. We have a great sequel to the Easter message. God the all in all, in and through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Let us pray. O thou who art the light of the minds that know thee, and the joy of the hearts that love thee, and the strength of the will that serve thee, grant us so to know thee that we made truly love thee. So to love thee that we may faithfully serve thee, whose service is our freedom and our fulfillment through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen. ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (soft piano music)