

Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ ♪
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Hallelujah, hallelujah ♪ The Lord be with you. Let us pray. Let us offer unto God our unison collect for the church. Oh, gracious Father, we humbly beseech you for your Holy Church Universal, that you would be pleased to fill it with all truth and all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it. Where it is an error, direct it. Where in anything it is a miss, reform it. Where it is right, establish it. Where it is in want, provide for it. Where it is divided, reunite it. For the sake of Him who died and rose again, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

- The old Testament lesson is found in Habakkuk 2:1-4. "I will take my stand to watch and station myself on the tower and look forward to see what he will say to me and what I will answer concerning my complaint. And the Lord answered me, 'Write the vision, make it plain upon tablets. So he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its time. It hastens to the end. It will not lie, for if it seems slow, wait for it. It will surely come, it will not delay. Behold, he whose soul is upright in him shall fail. But the righteous shall live by his faith.'" Reading from the Gospel of Matthew 13:10-17, "Then the disciples came and said to him, 'Why do you speak to them in parables?' And he answered them, 'To you, it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them, it has not been given. For to him who has, will more be given, and he will have abundance. But from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables. Because seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear nor do they understand.' With them indeed has fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says, 'You shall indeed hear but never understand. And you shall indeed see, but never perceive.' For this people's heart has grown dull and their ears are heavy of hearing and their eyes they have closed. Lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them. But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear. Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men long to see what you see and did not see it. And to hear what you hear and did not hear it.'" Here ends the reading of this morning's lesson. (orchestra music) (orchestra music drowns choir)

- Let us affirm our faith. We believe in God who has created and is creating, who has come in the true man, Jesus, to reconcile and make new. Who works in us and others by his spirit. We trust him. He calls us to be in his church, to celebrate his presence, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus crucified and risen, our judge and our hope, in life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God. Let us offer unto God our prayers of thanksgiving, intercession and petition. O glorious God, You who art the giver of every good and perfect gift. We give Thee thanks for this green time and the sun. For the walks of love, for small children, for shelter from the storm, and for the blessings of sleep. Our five and urgent senses praise you, oh God. For the large and growing summer sites, for sweet airs to smell, for sounds within sounds, and for gifts within gifts. We praise you oh Lord for all the times and the places where men have set compassion before hate and have accepted for the sake of us all, more than their share of the wounds and the sorrow of the world. Our hearts praise You for suffering transformed, for sorrow comforted, and for joy extravagantly given. Our minds praise you for the disciplines of learning, for the conversations of wisdom, and for the parables of truth that have been given to us. And our souls, oh Lord, praise you for your love endlessly persuading us out of our darkness and into Your marvelous light. We've glorify You, our Father, that undergirding all of Earth's seeming life, all chaos and all

calm, all clamor and silence is your peace. Awesome, amazing and eternal for us. Oh Lord, in whom the twisted things are straightened, the crippled are enliven and made whole, blind men see, and the slain arise in resurrection. We lift our prayers for our brothers and our sisters across your world. We remember before you, oh God, those who are old, whose silver thread shine now with honor and whose golden anniversaries sing with joy. Those who have enough health and money, who have found wisdom and learned patience and journeyed in faith, may your love be in their lives and bless their condition. Oh God of all ages, who would not forget the old whose health fails, whose children fail, and whose courage fail. Those who must worry to their dying day about bills. Those who feel unwanted and unneeded and who have not found faith. May your love break through their condition and quench their hunger and bring peace. Oh God of the strong, we remember those who are in the prime of life. Those whose work prospers, whose families are happy, who eat the fruit of competence and achievement, who are glad to be who they are, who look back with satisfaction and ahead with anticipation. May your power bless their condition and sustain them in hope and in joy. Oh God, we would not forget before you those whose work is frustrating. Those who discover in themselves a wound which will never heal. Whose marriage hurts or breaks. Those whose friends move away or fade away. Those who wish they were somebody else. May your love, our Father, break through their condition and quench their need and bring peace. We remember before you, our Father, the children of the world. Those who slurp their milk and crawl on the cool, summer grass. Who stagger with their first hilarious steps. The eager children who play ball and climb trees and ride bikes. Who get in fights and play games. The laughing, crying children whose hugs and kisses and tears are food and drink to so many of us. May your grace hallow their growth. We would not forget, oh God, our Father, the children who have no milk to drink. Who run from the whine of jet engines and scream at the whistle of bombs. Those who crawl on hot streets where there are no trees. Those whose bodies and spirits slowly starve in migrant shacks and in tenant farms. May your love, through our actions, break through their condition, quench their hunger and bring peace. Oh Lord of our lives, we ask your presence and your power for ourselves and our needs. We pray for those of us who are so burdened with the sins of mediocrity or guilt that we cannot let go of supposed securities for fear that justice would strip us naked. Ever loving Father, give us other ground to stand on. Show us that to renounce complicity to our lower selves is the beginning of true security in the community of Christ. Lord, we pray for strength in our own troubles. Oh, judge of history, you have let trouble surround us and enter into us. Some of us are tired. Some of us are in pain. Some of us are sometimes near despair. Send your spirit to each one of us and underneath our flagging faith, put an energy from outside us, we pray. Hold us fast in the love of the community, remembering that everything we suffer and endure has already been suffered and survived by Christ, who is our Lord. We would remember Jesus before you, Oh God, our Father. We remember the simplicity of his life. Oh God, without self punishment, he reduced his needs to a minimum. His message was short. He did not travel far nor live long. Give us, we ask, oh God, his disciples, a share of his simplicity and truthfulness so that our success may be of the same kind as His success. And our failure may be measured by His failure. In His name, we ask these and all things. Amen. We welcome to the University Service of Worship and to the University pulpit, the Reverend Robert L. Johnson, the director of the Wesley Foundation at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

- For most of us, as Protestants, faith is a matter of hearing, as Martin Luther put it, faith is an acoustical affair. We are nurtured through preaching, through reading the Bible, through the study of the catechism, through theology. For Protestants, religion has been a verbal, propositional, sometimes noisy affair. The

believer had to hear in order to be saved, but that is not the whole story of the human encounter with the divine. The ear is not the only channel of grace, else we would not have Giotto's Frescoes at Assisi or the Cathedral at Chartres, or the great vaulted space of this chapel. Cathedrals were built for people who did not read or write, who were yet unaddicted to words. While we continue to be dominated too often, by the notion that faith is a matter of hearing and believing, of ear and mind. We cannot escape the fact that biblical faith from beginning to end is about seeing and caring. About heart and about eyes. Unfortunately, our worship too often betrays this larger range of faithful experience. We are overly bound to words. The pulpit, and the book, and the sermon dominate both our architecture and our liturgy. But we cannot forget a rich history of celebration in which one worships through dramatic gesture, through touch, through taste, through smell, through silence. Most especially at the Eucharist, the words of the Psalmist come alive, oh taste and see that the Lord is good. And in our church tradition, we have given the task of interpreting, of communicating, and clarifying the faith to a discipline called theology. Theologos. But why not a discipline of theographica that takes the visual image as seriously as the written word. The eye as seriously as the ear. Matthew's lesson this morning suggests that Jesus' use of parables recognize this fact of our deadened and limited perceptions. You shall indeed hear, but not understand. You shall indeed see, but not perceive. Your hearts have grown dull and your ears heavy of hearing. Lest you should perceive with your eyes and hear with your ears. The experience of salvation as proclaimed by Jesus, *salvare*, meaning to be healed, to be in good health. This experience Jesus taught is a way to a totally fresh perception of our world. It means new birth, second sight, a third ear, a vision that penetrates the ordinariness of the world to the core and substance of life. It is the difference Carlos Castaneda notes between mirror looking and seeing. All of this is hard for us to take in because our perceptions are skewed. We have put the accent on hearing and believing on words, on priests, on systems, rather than on passion, insight, vision. And Jesus ask of us not what do you believe or what do you say, but what do you see? What do you care for? Faith begins less as an act of the mind or the will than an act of the imagination. A faithful person lives on another level, aesthetically, rationally, morally, spiritually. And we are called in our faith, as in the letter to Ephesians, "Awake, O sleeper from the dead, the call that echoes through Bach's great Cantata, *Wachet Auf*. To be saved, to be healed, is to see afresh. And so it was with Jesus. He saw something new on the horizon of history. He named it the kingdom of God. The rule of forgiving law. He saw it like a great underground current, like an invisible structure, like a seed bed of new consciousness. And while some would gladly see it and give themselves to it, others would fail to sense the claim of the kingdom. Some seeds would fall on rocky ground. Some would be devoured by the birds. Some would be scorched by the sun or choked out by weeds. A few would send down roots and become trees of insight sustained by grace. But why did it have to be this way? Why could not everyone see? Why could not Jesus simply have laid out a four full plan of salvation? Could it be that He was less interested in telling people what to believe than in equipping them to see for themselves? Can you not read, He set the signs of the times? How ironic it is that religion, especially in the south, has come to mean for many a set of blinders, restricting vision rather than enlarging. But the gospel Christ lived was not a set of blinders, but a lens to greater vision. And we can never forget that first preaching to the home folk in Nazareth. When Jesus identified his mission as a mission of release to the captives. Sight to the blind. Liberty to the oppressed. The claim of the Christian community through the ages is a qualitative difference in conversion. The scales have been removed. I once was blind, but now I see. But what is seen, what is the range of Christian vision? I take as my clue to answering this question, the way in which Jesus pointed to the love commandment as the sum and substance of the law and the prophets, and the beginning point of faith

in which it is said that faith is more than asset to doctrine or the response of will to law. It is the reach of heart, and mind, and soul, and body. It is the passionate encounter of the whole person in what Paul Tillich called A state of being ultimately concerned. It is described by Luther as those things the heart clings to. It is suggested in the German root of the word belief, (speaking German) The act of holding deep. Through such an act, in such a state we are given, as William Blake says, "Eyes of flesh, eyes of fire, in which we burn through the ordinariness of the world and see wonders and terrors, miracles and fresh moral possibilities. Indeed, the lamp, the eye is the lamp of the soul." Consider then the full range of such faithful vision. There is surely a rational dimension to the vision in which our minds love the creator through exploring the manifold dimensions of the creation, probing, discerning order and process, change and continuity, such vision being the discipline of the scientist, questing ever for new meanings beyond established patterns. It governed Copernicus in exploring an expanded universe. It spurred Columbus daring venture into roundness. It was the sustaining power of the old Galileo as he was hold before the fathers of the inquisition in a dark, old church in Rome and asked to recant his teachings on the geometry of motion. 69-year-old Galileo recant, but an observer on the scene noted that as he shuffled off from the witness stand, he was heard to mumble, "It still moves. It still moves." He had seen something the fathers of the inquisition could not see. There is as well, a creative, aesthetic dimension to our vision, that special sight given to artists, the capacity to see beauty in ever new forms, the sight that is exhibited in the remarkable drawings of da Vinci or in Michelangelo's vision of a David lurking beneath that piece of defective marble in the courtyard of the cathedral at Florence. It is the power ever to see reality from a fresh angle in new perspective. For the artist can never say, a tree is a tree is a tree. You've seen one tree. You've seen them all. Because Grandma Moses' tree is not van Gogh's tree. Picasso's man is not Rembrandt's man. Zorba the Greek had just this kind of creative vision. And Kazantzakis cherished Zorba as a friend and companion because he constantly delivered him from academics sterility. He had wrote Kazantzakis' "Just what a pen pusher needs for deliverance." The primordial glance which seizes its nourishment arrow-like from on high. The creative artlessness renewed each morning which enabled him to see all things constantly as for the first time and to bequeath virginity to the eternal elements of air, fire, ocean, water, woman, bread. How desperate academic life needs to be delivered from such staleness by the gifts of the artists and the poets. Beyond the rational and aesthetic angles of vision, there is the moral dimension. The sight given to Moses with his people in bondage, the sight that was generated in anger as he saw a Hebrew slave struck by an Egyptian master. And as the anger grew, the bush burn, and Moses saw a way out. Exodus. The same experience of the young Illinois lawyer who made the trip to New Orleans, and for the first time, experienced a slave market, in which families were separated on the block and a mother went to a Mississippi plantation, and a daughter to Alabama. And Abraham Lincoln found the same anger growing and resaw someday to strike. And he saw a way out in emancipation. It was the vision of Gandhi in India to see beyond British rule. It was the sight of Martin King, who on the eve of his death in Memphis said, "I may not be able to make it with you, but I have seen the promise land and you as a people will make it." Why is it given only to a few to see what Moses, and Gandhi, and King saw? John Oman, a late British theologian once said that a Christian is one for whom to see is to do. For whom the impulse of compassion is translated into the deeds of justice. It is the capacity to see ourselves in the binds, in the hurts of others. And yet we are accursed with what Gunnar Myrdal called The blindness of convenience. That phrase appearing in an American dilemma about the racial situation in America. We are cursed with the blindness of convenience. And so a courageous Southern governor, now Senator, Hollings, confessed that his determination to bring industry into South Carolina

blinded him to the fact of abject hunger and malnutrition in the people of Buford County. It is so difficult for us to see ourselves in relation to neighbor. Are we not there, very much there in the parable of the good Samaritan? Following the best and the brightest of our culture along the other side, blind to the American Indian, blind to the unseen Cambodians 25,000 miles below our bombers. And does not something in us resonate with the defensive response of those charged in the parable of final judgment? Lord, when did we see the naked, or hungry, or in prison? Not in our neighborhood. It is worth remembering the remarkable strategy employed by the prophet Nathan, as he trapped King David into seeing what he had done in taking Bathsheba from her husband Uriah. And sending Uriah into the battle lines to be killed. The prophet did not directly accuse David, but employed a certain guy in telling the king of a story of a rich man and a poor man. And the poor man had a single ewe lamb which he loved very much. And the rich man came along and took the lamb to entertain a guest. In hearing the story, David was in rage. Surely this man shall die. And all that was left was for the prophet Nathan to stick in the stiletto of judgment and say, "You are the man. Judgment and moral sight come to most of us that way, obliquely and indirectly, as our imaginations are caught up in the hurts of others. The range of vision is not yet complete. The unrational and aesthetic and moral sight, there is yet another dimension that is difficult, if not impossible to describe. Whatever you call it, mystic sight or spiritual sight, it involves a sense of transcendence or otherness that transforms our relationship to ourselves, to our brothers and sisters, to the whole life process. The Greek root of the word mystic, suggests a closing of the eyes. A shutting out of external reality to be aware of another inward reality. We find ourselves, the great Venerable Bede said, "Like birds flying into a lighted room out of the dark for a moment in the light and then again into the dark." But for that moment, something is seen, the light shines, there is inward clarity. Paul falls off that horse on the road to Damascus. Blind, but now knowing who he is and what he is about. John Wesley at Aldersgate knew something then he did not know with the Indians in Georgia or with the Moravians in the storm at sea. Call it grace, call it insight, call it ultimate acceptance. It remains the turning point in perception. It struck Augustine as he held up before himself the mirror of an indulgent life. It struck Pascal as he hung for a breathless moment out the door of a speeding horse carriage over a bridge in Paris and the prospect of death was before him. Such moments are moments of revelation. And because of them, we see our way more clearly. Such vision may come to us in ways and circumstances we cannot predict nor control. It may be in a moment of solitude. It may be in the crash of a great crowd. It may be when we hear a word of comfort or it may be in the midst of a grave and terrible disappointment. Or it may come not in words, but in pregnant silences such as, it came to Joe, and St. Francis, and Dag Hamarskjold. But however, and whenever such vision comes, count yourselves blessed, that in the great mystery of life, you have been given eyes to see and ears to hear. And know that you are in the glorious company of Paul, who knew how little we see, who knew the partial range of our knowing, who knew the fragmentary character of our speech, and yet, who knew that while we see through it last darkly, one day, we shall see face to face. And then beyond all inadequacy of words, we will identify with the cry of Joe. I have heard of him by the hearing of the ear, but now, my eye see a thing. Amen. Let us pray. Lord, now let us vow Thy servants depart in peace according to Thy word. For our eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou has prepared in the presence of all peoples. A light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to thy people of Israel. Amen. (orchestra music) ♪ Amazing grace ♪ ♪ How sweet the sound ♪ ♪ That saved a wretch like me ♪ ♪ I once was lost, but now I'm found ♪ ♪ Was blind, but now I see ♪ ♪ 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear ♪ ♪ And grace my fears relieved ♪ ♪ How precious did that grace appear ♪ ♪ The hour I first believed ♪ ♪ Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail ♪ ♪ And mortal life shall cease ♪ ♪ I shall possess, within

the veil ♪ ♪ A life of joy and peace ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (orchestra music) (indistinct) ♪ And praise ye the Lord ♪ (choir members drowns out other members) ♪ And praise ye the Lord ♪ (choir members drowns out other members) ♪ And praise ye the Lord ♪ (choir members drowns out other members) ♪ Alleluia, Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, Alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, Alleluia ♪ (choir members drowns out other members) ♪ Alleluia, Alleluia ♪ (orchestra music) ♪ Praise God, from whom all blessings flow ♪ ♪ Praise Him, all creatures here below ♪ ♪ Alleluia, Alleluia ♪ ♪ Praise Him above, ye heavenly host ♪ ♪ Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia ♪ ♪ Amen ♪

- Oh Lord, our God, send upon us your Holy Spirit, we ask to hallow our gifts, to cleanse and make perfect our wills, and to empower our ministry in the world. Grant us courage, Oh Lord, without coldness, compassion without confusion, and vision without narrowness. Send us forth, as your people, may we have peace with the restlessness of God. Grace that paradox of discipline and freedom. And always joy to fill all of life with celebration. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (orchestra music) ♪ Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart ♪ ♪ Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art ♪ ♪ Thou my best thought, by day or by night ♪ (orchestra music drowns out choir)