

(intricate organ music) (overlapping choral music) (reverent organ music) (echoing choral music) ♪
Hallelujah, ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ (echoing choral music) ♪ Hallelujah, ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, ♪ ♪ Hallelujah,
♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ (echoing choral music) ♪ Hallelujah, ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ (echoing choral music) ♪ Hallelujah, ♪ ♪
Hallelujah, ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, ♪ ♪ Hallelujah, ♪ ♪ Amen ♪

- The psalmist cries: make us to know thy ways, O Lord. Teach us thy paths. Lead us in thy truths and teach us, for thou art the God of our salvation, for thee we wait all the day long. Yes, praise be to God, we wait all the day long. Grace, mercy, and peace be yours this holy day, through our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. Let us now confess our sin to almighty God. Let us pray. Oh God, we confess our failure to be true. Even to our own accepted standards. Our choosing of the worse when we know the better, our unwillingness to apply to ourselves the standards of conduct we demand of others, our complacency toward wrongs that do not touch our own lives, and our oversensitiveness to those that do, our slowness to see the good in others, and to see the evil in ourselves, our hardness of heart toward our neighbors' faults, and our readiness to make allowances for our own. Oh Lord, forgive us and help us to amend our ways. (somber organ music) Together now, let us offer one another these words of assurance of God's forgiveness. By the mercy of God, we are united with Jesus Christ, and in our Lord we are forgiven. God makes us new by forgiveness, and renews our faith, rekindles our hope, and restores our love. Therefore, let us give thanks, for God is good and God's love is everlasting. Thanks be to God whose love creates us. Thanks be to God whose mercy redeems us. Thanks be to God, whose grace leads us into the future. Amen. Either the weather is getting a little bit warmer, or we're getting accustomed to it; I'm not sure which. But may I welcome you to Duke Chapel and to this very special service of worship in the Lord's house, here on this holy day. We're glad to have you, and trust that this will be a time of blessing and new meaning, for you and your life. It's a very special day for us, because we're blessed to have Mr. Michael Best back at Duke again. He has blessed us several times in the past as the tenor soloist for Messiah Performances, where he has thrilled thousands of us by his singing. Michael is undoubtedly one of Duke University's most distinguished graduates, and Durham's, one of Durham's most distinguished citizens. Michael, we are very pleased to have you back. Not only for the concert which you gave on Thursday night, and the concert you gave with the Duke Symphony and the Chorale on Friday night, but to have you sing for us and share God's message with us, here this day. We're also pleased to have his wife, Marsha Andrews, and Mrs. Best with us for this special service of worship. We're pleased to have all of you, and particularly to have Michael. I feel almost like saying that, in light of all of the publicity for today as Super Bowl Sunday, that I feel like saying yes, Virginia, there is something more than the Super Bowl on this day. And that more is a concert here this afternoon by Mr. Peter Marshal, who is the chapel organist for us. This will be Peter's first concert since becoming the chapel organist. He is a graduate of Oberlin College with a masters degree in music from Yale University, and a year of special study as a Fulbright Scholar at Lupig, Germany. Peter came to us and began his work here in August. Many of you have come to know him and to love him, and to appreciate his music. The concert will be this afternoon at five o'clock. The program is in the bulletin. I invite you to come and to share in this very special time with Peter and with others. Tomorrow morning and Tuesday morning, in the basement of the chapel, or rather, tomorrow all day beginning at 10

o'clock until four o'clock, and Tuesday the same time, the blood mobile will be here. Over 200 of you gave blood. 200 people connected with Duke a week ago, Saturday. They need more and they need it badly. The winter months seem to demand more blood. I used to be afraid to give blood, thinking that it would hurt or that it would do something bad to me. I can assure you, it doesn't do anything bad. As a matter of fact, it's quite a thrill to know that you may be helping someone. So I invite you, if you're healthy and able-bodied, and over 18 years of age, to come tomorrow or Tuesday to the chapel basement to give blood, so that others may benefit from your gift. The Reverend Charlene Kammer is our preacher for this day. The assistant minister to the university, her sermon title is: What Does It Mean to Repent?

- Let us pray. Almighty and most merciful God, you have given the Bible to be the revelation of your great love to us, and of your power and will to save us. Grant that our study of it may not be made in vain by the callousness or carelessness of our hearts, but that by it we may be confirmed in penitence, lifted to hope, made strong for service, and above all, filled with the true knowledge of you and of your son, Jesus Christ, amen. The Old Testament lesson is from Jonah chapter three, verses one through five, and verse 10. Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying: arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you. So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey, and he cried: get 40 days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. And the people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he said he would do to them, and he did not do it. Here ends the reading from the Old Testament. Amen. The epistle lesson is from First Corinthians, chapter seven, verses 29 through 35. I mean brethren, the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing away. I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord. How to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit, but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order, and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord. Here ends the reading from the epistle lesson. (tranquil organ music) (reverberating vocal solo)

- Will the congregation please stand, for the reading of the gospel lesson? The gospel lesson is from Mark chapter one, verses 14 through 20. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God and saying: the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel. And passing along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea, for they were fisherman. And Jesus said to them: follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men. And immediately, they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little farther, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were in their boat, mending the nets. And immediately he called them, and they left their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired servants and followed him. Here ends the reading from the gospel lesson. Amen. (organ music) (echoing choral music)

- Let us pray. May the words of my mouth, the meditations of our hearts, and the living of our lives be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and redeemer. Amen. On a chilly day in August, 1973, a stern-faced, shabbily dressed man could be seen pacing up and down by the cable car depot in downtown San Francisco. He wore a placard slung over his shoulders, with one word scratched on it: Repent. As pedestrians hurried by on their way to lunch or business, he would solemnly lift his arm, pick out a person near him, and say: guilty! After pacing up and down near the loading area, he would pause a few moments before repeating the gesture. As a tourist, standing in the crowd, I remember being startled and very perplexed at this strange behavior. Minutes crept by and the pantomime that was being enacted before us on the passing strangers, including myself, was rather eerie. We would stare at him, hesitate, look away, look at each other, and then look at this character again. Most folks hurried by on their way. But one man, turning to no one in particular, said very clearly: but how did he know? No doubt, many of us had similar thoughts on that day. How did he know, indeed? Karl Menninger, in his book, *Whatever Became of Sin?*, pursues these questions for that crowd, gathered in San Francisco. Guilty, everyone guilty. Guilty of what? Guilty of over-parking? Guilty of lying, of cheating on a test? Guilty of arrogance and pride toward our God? Guilty of borrowing, not to say embezzling? Guilty of unfaithfulness to a faithful spouse? Guilty of only evil thoughts, or evil plans? Guilty before whom? Is there a public safety officer watching? Did anyone see? Does he really know about it? But that isn't technically illegal, is it? Why surely I can make it up. I will give it back; I will apologize. I wasn't myself when I did that. No one knows about it. Oh, but I know I'm going to quit. It's a dangerous habit. I wouldn't want the children to see me. How in the world can I straighten out this mess? That solemn accuser on the San Francisco street corner has had many predecessors, as I recall. In the eighth to sixth centuries BC, a band of exhorters held forth in thriving Palestinian villages, attracting large crowds of people. To their listeners, these prophets likewise cried: guilty! And they proclaimed ominously that in spite of all general prosperity, sin was prevalent thereabouts. And the message was that if sin was unacknowledged and unrepentant, it would bring dire consequences indeed. These prophets who proclaimed such a message found themselves ignored, ridiculed as alarmist, jailed as trespassers or driven from their country. The Book of Jonah follows this tradition. But focuses on the activity of the prophet Jonah, himself. We find that Jonah had unsuccessfully attempted to escape the task that the Lord Yahweh had imposed upon him. That of preaching repentance to the Ninevites. The fact was that Jonah could have cared less for these gentile people of Nineveh, and he even assumed that God could not possibly care for them as well. But we discover, as the story unfolds, that Jonah refuses to let, is refused by God to run away from his mission. Jonah's dramatic rescue from the sea, and the belly of that great fish, was accomplished in order that he would be able to preach repentance. The surprise is that lo and behold, Jonah's preaching produced results. The people, even including their king, believed Jonah's message. They fasted, they dressed in their clothes of repentance, they turned from their ways of violence, and they asked for God's mercy in their lives. True repentance, the turning from evil ways with ample evidence of new behavior, in this case, was not what Jonah expected. He was angered considerably at this divine turn of events. Jonah had been so certain that his preaching would be in vain, and the fact that any individual, much less the whole city, would shape up and radically reorient their private and corporate life, was too much with Jonah. We are told that he went away sulking. According to the Old Testament tradition, genuine repentance was always embraced by marvelous, unexpected, earthshaking and mind-changing events. Repentance, the need for it and the acceptance of it, were part and parcel of the story and life of Israel. We see that before

the time of Jesus's appearance, John the Baptist was himself still crying in the wilderness, calling for repentance of God's people. No new theme here, it seemed, because John's message was that God was to act soon. So urgency and watchfulness were communicated to the people of Jesus's day. Jesus's sojourn as a preacher revealed that he, too, called for repentance. However, careful listeners to his message caught a hint of some new reality that was profoundly disturbing. Jesus himself, his very life, he proclaimed, was the event to which the Old Testament prophecies looked forward. Watch out, he said, for the promises of the kingdom of God are already being fulfilled. Mark uses the Greek word (speaking Greek) for repent, which literally means: to change one's mind. Jesus demanded that people repent, change their whole way of thinking, because the kingdom of God was upon them. But this wasn't the whole message. For it wasn't enough to be sorrowful for your sins. Repentance also required the demand of a disciplined life of faith. In his writing, Mark places the call of the disciples immediately following Jesus's call to repentance, to call to our attention the relationship between the two. Now I say, and confess to you, that repentance has always been one of those religious code words that doesn't often appear in my speech. But clearly, the scriptures call us and me to task, and make us deal with this bold word: repent. I believe that the recovery of and the incorporation of repentance into our fabric of life is part of our command, as would-be followers of Christ. Clarence Jordan, the founder of and now deceased spiritual leader of Koinonia Farms, has enlightened and inspired my struggle with the claims of repentance. He offers a comparison of (speaking Greek), with a more familiar word in our hearing. Metamorphosis. A metamorphosis speaks of a change in form, a preparation for a new order, a different existence. Metamorphosis, a change of mind and soul, that equips you for a new order. Jordan defines repentance like most of us understand it. He says that to repent is to get all sorry for getting caught at something. Being sorry is not enough. And in fact, I believe that our culture has warped the meaning of sorry, which became best expressed for me in the theme of a movie in the late '60s. Love means never having to say you're sorry. Well, that is just not true in my experience. I hear myself only too well, bending down to respond to our toddler, who very quickly and sweetly says, after hitting me: mama, I'm sorry. He and I both know that saying you're sorry isn't enough. A change in behavior is required to give meaning to our words. Fredrick Beatner further instructs us concerning repentance in a way that I find demands my response. To repent is to come to your senses. It is not so much something you do as something that happens. True repentance spends less time looking at the past, and saying I'm sorry, than to the future, and saying, wow. I'm afraid that this repentance talk in the Bible is serious business, after all. It seems that this call to a new order prefaces everything that Jesus had to say, and he didn't say it was around the corner, like prophets before him had declared. He astounded his hearers and us by claiming that the kingdom, God's new order of creation, is already here. The spirit of repentance and discipleship is present now. Where is this kingdom? It is constantly struggling for expression in the experiences of God's children, everywhere. I believe that any time that the love of God, the righteous, just, lively presence of God, can come to us and change us, that is a sign of the kingdom of God. Any time we are transformed into living the will of God, that is a sign of the kingdom. Sometimes a sign of the kingdom comes to us in an unexpected way. The news story of Mr. Charles Morris, who escaped from a North Carolina prison some 14 years ago now and created a new life for himself is such a sign, to me. This man has acknowledged his crime and confessed his guilt. He served time, perhaps an unjust sentence for the crime he committed, born out of a desperate moment. Since he has escaped, he has acted on a desire for a new life, he has worked out his own reentry into the quote: civilized world. He has adopted his own rehabilitation plan, which has worked, he has supported a family, he has worked hard at a job, he has become a model citizen, according to the

mayor of Trenton, New Jersey. His church family echos these signs of transformation and new life about Mr. Morris. Now we all know that Mr. Morris's case will not be easy for the courts, the legal courts, to decide. You see, his repentant posture might not be a valid enough legal defense, but I would like to say that would that we all showed the kinds of dramatic signs of the kingdom in our own lives. A young woman I know had a profound religious transformation. Her commitment led her to writing each of her friends and members of her family. And in those letters, she asked for forgiveness of every hurtful thing in her past relationships. I was very dismayed at receiving such a letter, because I didn't think that my friend had anything to ask of me for forgiveness, but then I came to realize that she was also asking for my blessing, for my affirmation of her new life of discipleship. That, I was able to give. And also, to point out to her several signs of a new strength and courage that I saw she now possessed. That was repentance for my friend.