

- It is always a pleasure to come back to North Carolina. One does not quickly forget 22 wonderful years spent in this fine state. It is pleasant too to come back to this pulpit, especially on the Dads' Day Sunday. I wonder if I am not the only father who has two sons at Duke, One teaching, the other in the Law school. I've had several happy visits to this pulpit. It was Dads' Day in 1948, Mothers' Day a little later, and now Dads' Day again. I would like to announce that I am rapidly qualifying for Grandfathers' day, if and when that day is celebrated. However, my visit here to preach the Commencement Sermon in 1952 stands out in my memory because of the unique intellectual appraisal of the graduating class, given by one of its members. Just prior to marching into this beautiful and magnificent chapel, I was talking to one of the seniors of the class of '52, and I said, "Jim, Tell me about your class. Are they smart?" "Well," he said, "they're just like the average senior class, I guess. Some of them are graduating magna cum laude and others 'Lawdy how cum'" (congregation laughs) I'm quite sure that the intellectual level of the seniors has risen since 1952. The 107th Psalm is a summons to thanksgiving, which makes it, I think a good psalm to consider in the month of November. The writer is reminding his readers of their debt to God. God has redeemed them from trouble. God has redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. God has brought them in from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south. "Let men," says the writer, "thank God for his goodness." Now to that, I would like to add a hearty and sincere Amen. You will remember that these psalms are really songs, songs that were sung in the temple. And I like the way the psalter ends. For the last four psalms or songs are songs of praise. The 107th and the 147th songs are alike, in that they very realistically list a number of reasons why the people of God should be thankful and happy. Indeed, why they should be enthusiastic. But a contrast that is, with much of the cold, formal, washed-out and faded and timid thing that we called religion today. Henry Sloane Coffin was right when he said that ours is an age that is wistful in matters of religion. We want something that we don't have. We feel the need of something that is left out of our personalities, our make-up, our lives. Christ never intended that a Christian should be wistful, He meant for us to be enthusiastic. In all honesty, I cannot blame a non-Christian for not being attracted to Christianity today. There are a number of valid reasons why he shouldn't be. For one thing, we are so very uncertain about what we believe. Especially is that true among protestants. The young woman who sat in my study not long ago and sought counsel, as she considered marrying a man who was of another faith was not unusual in her condition of not understanding or knowing what she was really supposed to believe as a protestant. Too many of our so-called Christian people today have no sincere, basic fundamental Christian belief. They are behaviorists. They are ethical, many of them. But they have had no deep religious experience. And they do not know Jesus Christ as a personal Savior. When Michael Faraday was facing death, Friends asked him, "what are your speculations?" "Speculations?" He said, "I have none, only certainties. I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day." I can't blame a non-Christian for not being drawn to the Christian faith on the basis of the certainty of the average protestant church member. For the average protestant church member doesn't know what he or she believes. I cannot blame the non-Christian for being unattracted by the Christian faith today, when we consider that it seems to make so little different in our lives. The Christian businessman conducts his business, not according to the code of the Christian faith and

religion, but according to the code that is existent in business circles in this day and age. The behavior of the average church member is no different on a weekday than the behavior of a respectable non-church member. Some several years ago, I was changing my shoes in the clubhouse at a golf course in Birmingham. While I was sitting there I listened to a foursome that had just come in off the 18th hole by way of the 19th, and one of them was doing most of the talking and every breath he drew, he profane the name of God and of Christ. Finally, I could stand it no longer. I just walked over to where he was and I tapped him on the shoulder. And I said, "I want to invite you to church." He looked up at me in a rather startle way. He said, "What are you, a preacher?" I said, "Yes, I'm a preacher." "Where do you preach?" I said, "I'm pastor of the First Methodist church, here in the city." "Why," He says "I'm a Methodist!" And I hope God will forgive me when I said under my breath, "Thank God you don't belong to me personally." A seeker once said to Pascal, "If I had your creed, I could live your life." And Pascal said in reply, "If you would live my life, you would have my creed." Non-Christians will never be drawn into the Christian faith on the basis of the living of the average church member today. Furthermore, we seem to care so little about giving it to others. The early Christians were enthusiastic in their desire to share their faith with non-believers. They went out and testified to the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and to the fact that faith in Christ and forgiveness of sin through that faith changed the man and made him a different, a new creature in Christ Jesus. When life and faith are blended, we speak for God. Then too, we are so lacking in enthusiasm when we do speak of religion or discussing. I am indebted to Dr. Harold Bosley, one-time Dean of this Divinity school for reminding me that the word enthusiasm has a religious origin. It was actually born of religious ceremony and fervor in ancient Greece. The Greeks had a name for it. After days of celebration, festival, drama and sacrifices the Greeks felt tremendous joy and they actually gave us two words, Enthusiasm, meaning God within and inspiration, meaning spirit within. We would certainly coin no such words from the average spiritual experience of today. The tragedy of that thing is that we do cherish and covet what we so vaguely call the American way of life, not knowing that the roots of that American way of life sink deeply into the soil of religious faith and conviction. Dr. Roy L. Smith was right when he said that four things that the Jews believed are believed by the true Christian, and out of those four things come our democracy and our so-called American way of life. First, that this is a theocentric world that God is in the center of it. Next, that humanity is divine. Next, that the individual is sacred. And finally, the consent of the governed, that you cannot have good government unless those who seek to govern have the consent to those who are to be governed. The tragic thing when the American people ignore and neglect the soil from which their democracy, their concept of the rights of people and individuals, rose. Actually our situation reminds me of a very sad experience, an incident of olden times. You find it in 137th Psalm. When the writer of the song cries out plaintively, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" He will remember of course, that the children of Israel, many of them, are in bondage in Babylon. And they find it very hard to keep up their religious practices and their religious faith in a foreign country. They're ready to hang their harps on the willow trees. They find it hard to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. It is most fitting, I think, that many people should ask that question today. How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? How can we sing the Lord's song in the strange land of science? This is a world today, and ours is a nation today, in which science is pre-eminent. Ever since Sputnik flared into the sky there has been a mad race, in the realm and world of science. We have the Redstone Arsenal in a Alabama. The most important man perhaps in Alabama today is Dr. Wernher von Braun. Incidentally He is a very charming and a very gracious man of Christian faith. But science is our God. John Sutherland Bonnell tells us that a young student was so scientifically minded that as he whispered his

endearments in his girl's ear, he kept his finger on her pulse to test her reactions. That may be the scientific method, but believe me, it leaves much to be desired. (congregation laughs) (clears throat) How can we sing the Lord's song in the strange land of statism and totalitarianism? Where you have a direct contrast between Christianity and Communism. Christianity. In Christianity, we live for God and for our fellow man, Man is born for the glory of God and for the service of mankind. Nearly every Sunday morning, from one to two or three little babies are presented to me for dedication and Christian baptism before the alter of the church. My congregation loves to see that service and frequently some of our young babies broadcast over radio at a very tender age. I understand that the Communists now have worked out some sort of a dedicatory service for babies. That they are now having a dedicatory service as they dedicate their babies to the state. How can we sing the Lord's song in the strange land of statism? How can we sing the Lord's song in the strange land of alien customs and crass materialism? That isn't easy. Some of you have read a book which has recently come out, written by Vance Packard called "The Status Seekers". Coming up here, Mrs. Hardin and I were alternating in the driving, and the person who wasn't driving would read loud from that book. It's a frightening thing. It's a disturbing thing. The whole thesis of the book is that all over our land people are status conscious. Here is a calling, a profession, a vocation, which ranks higher than another, and people seek to increase or elevate their status or standing in the community. He points out that in great companies you can tell the status or position of various men who work for that company by the automobile which they drive. Men on the lowest levels drive Chevrolets and Fords and Plymouths, with nothing but a heater. A little higher in the status scale, they have the better make or model of cars, with radios and power steering. And then you move on up, through the various fields or grades of automobiles, and top executives can drive Cadillacs, within the \$1 to \$5,200 scale or range. And the top executive can drive the best. He's at the top. I'm thinking seriously of suing that fellow. Until she read it in that book, my wife did not know that the only minister who had status in the community was the Episcopal rector. (congregation laughs) How can we sing the Lord's song in the strange land of crass materialism? How can we sing the Lord's song in the strange land of alien customs? Customs that is, that are alien to our Christian faith and practice. Just about the time that The Duke of Windsor was about to become the Duke of Windsor and no longer the King of England. The Archbishop of Canterbury said something about the International Set, with which the Duke and the Duchess were running at that time. Some of you will recall that he said, "Their ways are not our ways." That can also be said of many of the social practices and customs of the day, and we stopped to think that they are not the ways of devout Christian believers. It used to be, when I was a boy, That non-church members dared do nothing that would offend the church members. Nowadays, I'm sorry to say that all too often it seems to me that church members dare do nothing that would offend the social practices and customs of their communities, regardless of what their Christian faith has say to them about those practices. How can we sing the Lord's song in the strange land of alien customs? Christians can say that or ask that today. The tragedy is that we have left our familiar land of religion and are not satisfied with the strange lands into which we have moved. I think one of the most tragic things that I have seen in the newspapers recently was this story of the man from America, who not long ago, openly and publicly disavowed his American citizenship, renounced it and wanted to be a citizen of Russia. And within 24 hours after he had made that drastic decision and taken that fearful step, he wanted backed into America. What a tragic thing when so-called religious people grow ashamed of their religious convictions and their religious faith. Give them up, to take up the customs and traditions of these strange new modern lands into which so many of us have moved. And then having moved into those lands, and missing the homeland of Christian

faith, they grow wistful and long to be at home again. If we don't sing a song of Christian faith with great enthusiasm, it's because we have no song to sing. The song, if we had it, is in here inside us. But we restrain ourselves from enjoyment and enthusiasm. Somebody might think that we are really religious and that would be tragic. In America, the Methodist Church to which I belong grew leaps and bounds as it rode the crest of a self-created wave of religious enthusiasm. What has happened to many Methodists today? You can answer that as well as I. Many of you are familiar, I'm sure with Bishop Roy's short story of The church that had become very formal and ritualistic and somewhat cold in the process. And they were attracting the right kind of members, you know now, in the right section of the city, with the right status. But they had one fellow in the church that just about the time this beautiful service was reaching its climax of magnificence, beauty, and appeal, this old boy would shout. Well, they did what every church does in an emergency. They appointed a committee to go talk to him about it. Committee went down to where the old man lived and they found him down in the cornfield back of the house, plowing corn. So they waited till he got to the end of a row, and they said, "Now, Mr. So and so, we'd like to talk to you just a minute." He said, "Gentlemen, I'm delighted to see you." And they said, "You know, our church has gone through some changes recently. We have a far more beautiful service now and we are attracting the kind of members we want in our church and everything is going beautifully. We have a very wonderful minister, gifted and eloquent and things are just going along fine. But every once in a while, you break into a shout and that disturbs people. And we've been a part of the committee to come down and ask you if you will stop it." Old man said, "Yes, gentlemen, I'll try to stop." He said, "I know I shouldn't do it. I'm sure it disturbs people." But he said, "When I look at these old dusty shoes of mine and know that someday I'm going to wear gold slipper, I look at these old worn-out clothes of mine and know that someday I'm going to wear a long white robe. And I look at this old battered and beaten hat of mine and know that someday I'm going to wear a starry crown, here one of you fellows hold this mule, I'm gonna shout right now!" What has come over us? I'm not pleading for shouting. But I am pleading for enthusiasm in our faith. Are there not thousands of us who have been redeemed through faith in Christ? Then let the redeemed of the Lord say so. Let the redeemed say so by word of mouth. Speak up for God. Don't be ashamed of your religious faith and of your religious convictions. Your country was built upon that foundation. Let the redeemed say so by the way we live honestly, soberly, constructively, ethically, if you please, but always in a way that is compatible with Christian preaching and Christian teaching. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so by the way we love, unselfishly, purely. Let the redeemed the Lord say so by the way we serve and give, because we enthusiastically believe that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Of course things aren't rosy. But that doesn't discourage the true Christian. William L. Sullivan says that the Christian religion has deposited upon the alter of wisdom. The most profound and most beautiful set of paradoxes ever laid there. Defeat with lips to the bugle of victory. Hopelessness, burning with expectation. Sadness, radiant with love. Darkness, dazzled with mourning. Death, shaken with the song of immortality. Let redeemed the Lord say so. O Lord our heavenly Father, Thou who hast redeemed us through the death of Thy Son, have mercy upon us, we pray thee. That we have grown so cold and so indifferent. Renew right spirits within us. And help us, we pray thee to reflect in our speech, in our living, in our loving, in our giving, and in our serving, the gratitude, which we feel toward thee. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace now and forevermore.