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music concludes)

- Let us pray. Let your mercy, oh God, be upon us, and may the brightness of your spirit illumine our inward selves. May the Christ who abides forever, now, come and kindle our hearts, and enlighten our minds, so that we may receive and share the hope and the joy of your good news to us. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen. (lively church organ music) (lively church organ music continues) (lively church organ music continues) (lively church organ music continues) (lively church organ music concludes) God is more ready to forgive us, than we are to confess. The prayer of confession gives us one opportunity to confess to God our own willfulness and weaknesses. Thus together, will you join with me as we pray, this prayer of confession responsibly? Oh Lord our God, we have craved admiration and security, for we would rather be successful than useful. We have sought to be master rather than servant. We have considered numbers important than persons. (congregation responds faintly) We have been immobilized by the magnitude of problems and the infinite possibilities for choice. We have been too proud to admit our mistakes in judgment. We been creative in our excuses and imaginative in our rationalizations. (congregation responds faintly) We have been capable witnesses for the wrong things. We have been so eager for results that we have been careless about our methods. We have turned away from necessary conflict because we were frightened. In the midst of crisis, we have encouraged business as usual. (congregation responds faintly) We have neglected to worship you with our whole lives. We have avoided the voice of conscience, we have wasted our gifts, and we have refused to be known as servants. We have not been faithful to our calling. (congregation responds faintly) Jesus said, let the person who is without sin, throw the first stone. And not a rock was cast. Our sins, yours and mine, which are many, when confessed to God are forgiven, through Jesus Christ. Let us go, and go in peace. Amen. (church organ music) (operatic singing) (operatic singing continues) (operatic singing continues) Will you stand for the reading of the gospel lesson? Reading from the gospel according to St. Mark, chapter nine, verses 19 through 24. let us hear this word from the Word of God. "And he answered them, 'Oh, faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.' They brought the boy to him and when the spirit saw him, immediately, it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, 'How long has he had this?' And the father said, 'From childhood. and it has often cast him into the fire, and into the water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us.' And Jesus said to him, 'If you can, all things are possible to him who believes.' And immediately the father of the child cried out, and said, 'I believe, help my unbelief.'" May God add to you and to me, some of the meaning, lying in this word from His holy Word, Amen (lively church organ music) (choir singing) Together, with one voice, let us affirm our faith. We are not alone. We live in God's world. We believe in God who has created, and is creating. Who has come in the truly human Jesus, to reconcile and make new. Who works in us and others through the spirit. We trust God who calls us to be the church. To celebrate life and its fullness, 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. The Lord be with you. (congregation responds faintly) Let us pray. It is a new day, oh God. And we thank you for it. It is good to be alive, to see the dawning of another Lord's day. When we gather here in remembrance of our Lord's resurrection, this is the Lord's day. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. We offer you, oh God, these and other words of thanks. We thank you, for difficult situations, which make us strong. For sinful and dangerous possibilities, which keep us alert. For enemies we have made when we have stood for right and just causes. For demanding opposition, which calls for the best from us. For pain, which keeps us sensitive to the needs of our body and spirit. For friends who care for us, who really care in spite of what they know about us. For Jesus Christ, and for the love with which he loves us and cares for us. Since you have said to us in your word, ask, seek, knock, we offer this prayer of intercession. Right now, oh God, in this chapel service. For listening to these words, someone feels lonely, is hurting, is sad, is in pain, is near death, is crying, is scared, disturbed, frightened, worried, or guilt-ridden. Hear our cries for ourselves and for others. This day, this week, some of us must make difficult decisions, must face new and disturbing ideas, must meet hard and demanding opposition, and all of us must face the unknown. Hear our cries for ourselves and for others. We pray, oh God, for those who teach, and those who learn. For those who are ill and those who treat illness. For all those who make this decisions about our lives and our futures. For the president, the Congress and judges, for all who have worldly authority over us. Hear our cries for ourselves and for others. It is reassuring, oh God, to read your word which says, "My grace is sufficient for you." Supply us now, oh merciful Lord, with your forgiving spirit, your loving concern, and your sustaining presence. Let us know truly, that nothing, absolutely nothing can separate us from the love as we have known it, in Christ Jesus. And so may we know your peace, which passes understanding, your goodness which blesses us continually, your love which comes to us in real and personal ways. These and all our prayers we offer, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Your son, our savior. And hear us, oh God, as we pray together, the prayer which our Lord has taught his disciples, saying, 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, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespassed against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. In the name of Christ, I welcome you to this place, to this service of worship, to this time together. When we celebrate once again, the presence of our Lord, Jesus Christ, as he comes to us, loves us, and cares for us. So whether you worship here regularly, or whether you're visiting, whether you come as a stranger, we welcome you, and pray that you may not leave as a stranger, but has one who has shared your love, and one who has been loved. This evening at 6:30, we continue our summer services of worship. If it's pretty, that is, if it isn't raining again. The service will be in the gardens. If it is raining, the service will be here in the chapel, and you are invited to share in this informal service with us. It is my personal privilege, to welcome to the pulpit of Duke chapel this morning, the Reverend Dr. Lawrence Miller, minister of St. Mark AME Zion church here in Durham, the largest AME Zion church, south of Washington. A pastorate which he has served now, he tells me for just over 11 years. My family have come to know, and to love, and appreciate him and his wife and family. When first, we came here, his wife taught one of our daughters in the fourth grade, at Hope Valley school where she continues to teach. The Reverend Dr. Miller, his wife and family, are influences for good and right, in many ways in this community. And so we welcome him to the pulpit this morning, and hear him gladly, as he brings to us, the good news from God's Word.

- Let us pray. Let the words of our mouths, the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in thy sight, oh Lord. Our strength, and our redeemer, amen. On Sunday morning, the congregation is, at least entitled to a good text. The sermon, may, or may not be good. But at least every faithful church-going congregation, is entitled to a good text. I have a good one today. It is in the gospel of Saint Mark, 9:24. "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." I want to use as a subject, faith, doubt, tension, in every man. Raphael's Transfiguration, Perhaps his greatest work, shows the upper half of the canvas, the glorification of Jesus Christ, before, the awe-struck eyes of the three disciples. And if you remember, in the lower half of the canvas, we see a distorted father bringing, his demon-possessed son, to Jesus Christ, in the dim hope that he might heal him. The mountain, of transfiguration, where Jesus prayed, you remember? So that heaven was disturbed, and Moses and Elijah, came down to see what was happening on the mountain. The atmosphere was so charged, until Peter, James, and John could not stand the rarefied atmosphere of spiritual attunement, for that which is divine. So they fell asleep. Like a lot of people do in the church today, praise God. And Peter, became so excited, and said, "Lord, let's stay up here." The beauty, and the magnificence of the moment is so overwhelming. Let's build some tabernacles, or some buildings, or some houses, or whatever you want to call 'em, and let's remain here. But Jesus, refused to remain there. He went, into the valley, and this is life's fluctuation. On Sunday, we have at our churches, the rapturous height of worship, and the still, small voice of God, speaking to something that is deep within all of us. We have the joy, and the vision, and the beauty, and the goodness, and the magnificent glory, and that we are in the presence of the divine. This is our mountain of transfiguration. All of us, would like to stay there. But life moves from the mountain of transfiguration to the valley, the anguished valley, the valley with its twisted and demented forms, where men and women, who are struggling with the difficult issues of life, The gut issues of life, clamoring for life and for hope. And they cry to us, out of the depth of their own soul for help. One writer, said only to have the echo of helplessness reverberate back into their own troubled soul. I believe that human living moves into the glory of the mountain of transfiguration into the valley, where life is lived in all of its terrifying realities. It was in this valley where things really happened. This father brought his son, to Jesus and said to him, "Now, if you can do anything, praise God. Disciples who brought in to preachers, and you gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and demons. And they have been around you. All they can do is discuss, debate, analyze, rap, if you please. Now they should have had the power but they didn't, now we come to you." The father says, "We come to you as the last result." The man, was honest. He said, "Now, look here, Jesus. If you can do anything, now, I don't want any discussion, if you can help us, I'll do anything, please help me." The father said, "you know, I have faith, but my faith is cooked. It is pressured by the tragic realities of life. It is up against the wall, and I don't have maneuvering room, my faith wants to hold on, Jesus, but it's sinking." The issues of life, pressing in on him, now. "Now, Lord, I want to believe, but you gotta help me." We are, a strange mixture of faith and doubt, belief and unbelief, you know, there's a war in our minds. One day we cry, "Lord, I believe," and the next day, we wonder about it. On sunny days we sing, "My heart is fixed, oh God," but when the dark days come, and when trouble sink us, we wonder about whether our hearts are fixed or not. Sydney Lanier describes, the state of living as hard in and head out, the split personality in religion, and this is a problem for the father, in the text, he cries, "Jesus, help me When my faith falls short." The foot of the mountain, there, Jesus, was confront with faith, doubt, tension. And I remember when this thing first confronted me I was in a civil rights march in Montgomery, Alabama. And we were singing, "We shall overcome." We shall overcome, someday deep down in my heart, I do believe. And then, the corroding effects of doubt gripped my own life, and in the middle of the street of Montgomery, doubt, doubt, doubt.

And I turn to Jesus, as this man of our text did, Lord, I want to believe, but help me. All things are possible, only believe. Everybody doubts, skeptic, believer, pulpit and pew. And shall within forever, live at this poor dying rate. Genuine doubt. Not mucus that follows shabby conduct, that is not doubt, but rather the scum that gathers in, on a lotic lake and clears with honest confession. And I'm not speaking about patience with coerciveness, but rather, that tight-structured religion where everything must be done at this time, and an order which is not elastic enough to prepare for the invasions of the Holy Ghost. Yes, I know Holy Spirit, but the Black tradition, we believe in Holy Ghost, because we believe that, where there is ghosts around something happens. But the father cries out to Jesus. "If you can do anything," this is genuine doubt. What he is saying to Jesus, maybe the whole scheme of things is demonic. Maybe life was designed to be twisted and frustrated, and full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Maybe, maybe life is a tale that is told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. The rationality of human existence is dramatized in the behavior of man, and they make their Socrates drink hemlock and releases its Barabbases and crucifies its Christ, and beheads its Paul, what kind of mad nonsense is this? The doubter ask, how can we believe in God? We too, at the foot of the mountain, everybody doubts. Lord I believe. The artist has to believe in beauty. The singer must believe that when he sings a song, that somebody will hear a melody. The teacher must believe, and God knows the preachers got to believe, that when he stands here on Sunday morning, and after Sunday morning, and preach the Word, the preachers got to believe that somebody is going to hear the word and believe. You know the story, of the atheist, who was asked if he were Christian, when he replied angrily, "No, I'm not a Christian, no, I'm not a Christian, Thank God." Everybody believes it was George Santayana who wrote, "Columbus found the world and had no chart, save one that faith deciphered in the sky, and trust the soul's invincible surmise, with all its science and with all its art." Everybody believes, the farmer, believes in the fidelities of nature. And in this, he puts his trust. The scientist believes in the universe, the Russian astronaut talking about he didn't see God, How does he think he got where he got? I believe, for every drop of rain that falls, a flower grows. I believe that somewhere in the darkest night, a candle blows. I believe for everyone who goes astray, someone will come show the way. I believe that above the storm, the smallest prayer is heard. I believe that someone in the great somewhere, hears every word that we say. And every time I hear a newborn baby cry, or touch a leaf, or see the sky, then I know why, I believe. I believe. I believe, I believe. In the name of him who is to know is to love, and to love is to serve. Faith, doubt, tension, in every man. Amen, amen. Amen. (church organ music) (church organ music continues) (church organ music continues) (church organ music concludes) (soft church organ music) (soft church organ music continues) (lively church organ music) (operatic singing) (operatic singing continues) (soft operatic singing) (soft operatic singing continues) (operatic singing) (soft church organ music) (operatic singing) (operatic singing concludes) (lively church organ music) (lively church organ music continues)

- We give, oh God, because you have first given to us. We love, because you have first loved us. Use these gifts, and use each of us to help others, because we are called not to be served, but to serve. Jesus, our Lord showed us how. Help us, oh God to do as we know. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen. (church organ music) (church organ music continues) (church organ music continues) (church organ music continues) (church organ music concludes) Grace of our Lord in savior Jesus Christ. (preacher speaking faintly) (faint church organ music) (church organ music crescendos) (church organ music fades) (garbled church organ music) (garbled church organ music continues)