

(bright church music) (bright church music continues)

- When we gather to praise God, we remember that we are his people who have preferred our wills to his accepting his power to become new persons in Christ. Let us confess our sin before God and one another. Eternal father we confess that often we have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will. We have broken your law. We have rebelled against your love. We have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us we pray. Free us for joyful obedience through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen. Hear the good news Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That is God's own proof of his love towards us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven Glory be to God, amen. Let us pray together the Lord's prayer. 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 and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever, amen. (slow church music) (choir singing) (choir singing continues) The scripture lesson for today is taken from Judges 7:16-22. And he divided the 300 men into three companies and put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars with torches beside the jars. And he said to them, look at me and do likewise. When I come to the outskirts of the camp do as I do. When I blow the trumpet I and all who are with me then blow the trumpets also on every side of all the camp and shout for the Lord and for Gideon. So Gideon and the three, and the 100 men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch. And when they had just set the watch and they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands and the three three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars holding in their left hand the torches and in their right hands, the trumpets to blow. And they cried a sword for the Lord and for Gideon. They stood every man in his place around about the camp and all the army ran. They cried out and fled. When they blew the 300 trumpets, the Lord said every man sword against his fellow and against all the army and the army fled. That's the end of the reading of the scripture. (choir singing) Let us say together, an affirmation of 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. The Lord be with you and with your spirit. Let us pray. Almighty and most glorious God we, your most unworthy people give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and to all people. Our blessings go forth to you for our creation, preservation, and all the wonders of life, the means of grace and the glory of hope, but above all for your incredible and overwhelming love for each of us. We praise you our God for our friend the sun who is our day, and who brings us the light who is fair and radiant with a very great splendor. We praise you for our friend, the moon and for the stars which are clear and lovely through our sky. We praise you for the wind, the air and the clouds, the calms, and the storms, for water who is very serviceable to us and humble and precious and chaste, for the earth and its creatures we praise you most of all. For the earth sustains us and all its creatures and grows fruit and flowers of many colors. For all these wonders we loud and go glorify

you, our God. Our thoughts move now to our sisters and brothers and to the society in which we participate. We offer our prayers of intercession. We pray most fervently for all people everywhere who have to make war. Heal the madness of the nations, comfort the broken hearted, bind up the wounds of the sick and bring peace to the spirits of the dying. Teach all of us the ways of making peace instead of the ways of making aggression and commit us to the actualization of peace in all times. We pray for all people who suffer from oppression and competition. We earnestly long for a world where some people do not relegate other people to the poverty and misery of the underdog and for a world where no one has to lose. Be with us God as we go about creating a better society for all people. We pray for our brothers and sisters who are, or soon will be in new situations and with new people. Convert their fear into excitement and enable them to be open and joyous in their new possibilities. We pray for our friends and loved ones as well as people we do not know who suffer the pain of sickness. Be with our healers, dear God so that wherever possible, people may be restored to health. Most sincerely, we pray for ourselves, that each and every one of us may come to know and love ourselves for each of us is beautiful and precious but we are hard-pressed to believe this. Instill in us the desire to take ourselves seriously and finally be with us so that all living will be wonder and all wonder living. This is our prayer, oh God, our creator and sustainer. Amen.

- It is an honor and a privilege for me to be in this place on this occasion when the 1972 Duke University football team is being recognized. Having myself experienced in the past the rigors of pre-season practice at this very institution, I can say that I know something of the trials and the tribulations of you athletes and I'm well aware that sore muscles are the rule of the day. Our topic for the morning is the game plan. Let us pray. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight oh Lord, our strength and our redeemer, amen. The game of plan. How many times will you and I hear this term in the weeks and months to come? In less than two weeks the Duke University football team will engage on the grid iron the University of Alabama. What will be the game plan of Duke to move the ball offensively and what will be the game plan to contain the Alabama offense? What will be the game plan to contain Alabama guard John Hannah and tackle Jim Craft? Then very shortly thereafter, Duke will engage the University of Washington. What will be the game plan to contain the Herald quarterback of the University of Washington sunny sixth killer and in the ensuing weeks? What will be the game plan to contain North Carolina state's Willy Burton, Wake Forest, Ken Garrett and North Carolina's Ike Oglesby? Also what will be the game plan wherein Steve Jones will be enabled to run toward daylight? What will be the game plan wherein quarterback Johnson will have time to throw and complete forward passes? Looking at Duke's football schedule it would seem to me that Duke better have some excellent game plans this year. Many of us throughout the United States have become somewhat familiar and have tuned into what is known as "Monday Night Football". Much to the distress it would seem to me of many housewives. This is Howard Cosell with still another Monday night of NFL football. With me is Dandy Don Meredith and fabulous Frank Gifford. Then Cosell will turn to Meredith and say what is the game plan of the Chiefs tonight or of the Falcons or of the Redskins? What is the game plan to make sure that Bob Hayes does not get open or to make sure that Sunny Jorgensen does not throw or complete the long bomb? If ever a term Cosell overworks it is this term the game plan. Now I dare say that for most of us here, this term, the plan is most familiar, but to those who are not familiar with this term, let it be said that the game plan is a plan of action. The plan of attack. It is the strategy by which a team prepares for a game with the hope that such strategy, such a game plan will bring victory. Did you pick up the game plan in the scripture that was just read a few

moments ago? The excellence of Gideon's game plan, its planning, its timing, its use of personnel has been praised down through the centuries by tacticians. The call of God to Gideon that he should become the player coach of the Israelite team occurred while Gideon was about his business of threshing wheat. Gideon and his people, the Israelites were at this time living in the promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey and yet it was also a land flowing with fierce enemies. The Midianites were making life miserable for Gideon and his people. On their swift camels, they would come across the planes and the valleys plundering the crops, stealing and killing. The situation is exemplified in the fact that Gideon instead of threshing wheat on the top of a mountain with oxen is threshing his wheat in the cramped and secret quarters of a wine press. It was as he was about his work, his business that the call of God came to Gideon to be the player coach. 32,000 responded to pre-season practice. 32,000, however Israelites versus 135,000 Midianites. The odds were not too good. And yet then the head coach, God did a rather strange thing. He spoke to Gideon the player coach and said that he was afraid that the players might get the idea that through their strength and through their might, they would think they had won the victory rather than realizing that it was through the might and power of God that victory was to come. And so he suggested to Gideon that he cut some members off of the team. I'm sure that Gideon had a few words with the head coach but the head coach prevailed. And so Gideon said to his 32,000, if there are a number of you who do not want to undergo the rigors and trials and tribulations of pre-season practice, then now is a good time to go home. 22,000 thought that it was a good idea and this left Gideon with 10,000 versus 135,000. And yet the head coach, God was still not satisfied saying to Gideon, there are still too many. And through the rigors of preseason practice, another 9,700 fell by the wayside leaving Gideon with a team of 300 members. These were the odds that the head coach turned over to Gideon, the player coach. It would appear to me that Gideon better have a very good game plan and that, he did. The 135,000 Midianites were camped in the valley. Their camels were so numerous that they could not even be counted but Gideon went about devising his game plan. To each of his 300 team members, he gave a trumpet, a jar and a torch. Timing would be essential. He divided his 300 into three groups of 100 men each and he placed these men, his team members on the hillside surrounding the Midianites there in the valley. And then as the change of the watch came in the middle of the night, the prescribed signal was given. Each of the 300 men blew his trumpet, smashed the jar, held aloft the torch, and shouted. The Midianites awoke. And as they looked up, all they saw were torches lights on the surrounding hillside and shouts and noise. They panicked, they drew their swords and in the darkness of the night, as they fled, they killed each other. It was as if the Israelites had kicked off. The Midianites defeated themselves. What a game plan. Now this account of Gideon is recorded for us at one point in the New Testament. Why is the account of Gideon and the 300 remembered by the New Testament church? Obviously the New Testament church needed to hear this word of faith. That the God who acts in history uses men of faith for his purpose and through such men, performs unbelievable accomplishments. And this, my friends is exactly what the almighty, the God who acts in history is saying in and through the game plan of Jesus Christ to you and to me. Why God chose such a game plan? To say to you and to me that he wants us on his team, I don't know. Surely he could have chosen some other game plan but he chose to say in Jesus Christ I who created you care for you. And even though you turn your back on me, even though you spit in my face, I love you. My care, my concern, my love for you is not just in word but it is in flesh and blood. It is alive, it is warm. It is my understanding that senior linebacker, Jack Childress and his wife, Donna have a little girl, Christie. Now, how does Jack go about conveying to his daughter that he loves her? Does he just have to practice, pick up the phone and get his wife, Donna on the phone and say to her, Donna please

tell Christie, convey to her in word that I love her? No, Jack goes to Christie and he takes Christie into his arms and he holds her and he caresses her. And in such a way through warmth and flesh and blood he is saying to her, I love you. Likewise is God's love for you and for me. Throughout the ages, he has spoken with words, I love you, but in Jesus Christ, his game plan, God has become flesh, taking mankind into his arms, holding us. Christ is God's word of love made flesh. It is the word of love alive with warmth to it. Christ is God's game plan conveying to you and to me that he accepts us on his team though we fumble the ball, though we miss the block though we drop the touchdown pass. Christ is God's game plan conveying to us that he accepts us on his team. The following is a letter received by a chaplain who was serving in Vietnam. Dear chaplain, I ain't much with words and I get the little tongue tied when I try to say what I mean about something that's really important. I'd like to say this to you face to face but maybe I can do it better in a letter. First off, you know the kind of guy I've been. I'm not gonna try to hide that. Everybody in the unit knows, old Gus, a big man. That's what I've tried to be. I guess I fooled about everybody. The only thing really big about me has been my bluff but chaplain, you and God saw through me and you made me see myself and what I saw made me sick. You showed me one thing. I talked a lot about the hell of Vietnam. It was in me. I didn't find it over here. I brought it with me. Chaplain, I don't know how to pray but last night told God to count me in. I've been such a slob. I didn't want to ask a regular preacher like you to baptize me. So when nobody was watching, I baptized myself in the creek. When I prove that I ain't kidding about all this, I want you to do it again the way it should be done. And Gus signed this letter, the letter which reached the chaplain after Gus was killed, he signed it, a new member on God's team. How do you react when you become aware that you are on the team, that you are on the traveling squad? Why, a good feeling goes through you. You are excited. You share the fact that you are on the team with your friends and perhaps you even call loved ones and say I am on the team with excitement. You share this knowledge. So the news that you and I are on God's team right now is good news. It is cause for rejoicing and excitement. And as the New Testament church needed to hear this word of faith, that God uses men of faith for his purposes and through such men can perform unbelievable accomplishments such as Gideon and the 300. So we need today to hear this word that we just as we are right now are members of God's team. And through us, he can perform unbelievable accomplishments. Being members then of God's team, let us make sure that we do not hinder but help the team. Coach Zaki was making his concluding remarks to his team in the final moments of halftime. The first half had not gone too well for the team. And during the halftime, some adjustments had been made in the game plan and coach Zaki was giving the final touch to his pep talk. He was reaching the very height of excitement within himself and his players were reacting with emotion and with the desire to get out on the field and the second half to play harder and to emerge victorious and coach Zaki concluded his talk with now gentleman move through that door to victory. The only problem is he pointed toward the wrong door but the team members and their excitement and thrill ready to get with it ran through the doors straight dab into the indoor swimming pool. Being aware anew, that it is God who brings victory and that you and I right now are on God's team. Let us go through the doors of this chapel, into the world. Not to live (indistinct) and incipit lives but to go through the doors of this chapel into the world to live lives of true joy, elation, excitement and celebration. Conscious that the God who acts in history has us on his team right now and as members of his team, we are victors, so be it. Let us pray. Almighty God in your game plan, you accept us as we are on your team. We would share in that victory which is yours and ours in Jesus Christ in whose name we pray, amen. (bright church music) (bright church music continues) (slow music) (soprano voices singing) (soprano voices singing continues) (slow music)

(bright music) (bright music continues)

- Oh God, of whose gifts we have all received accept this offering of your people. Remember in your love those who have brought it and those for whom it is given. And so follow it with by blessing that it may promote justice and peace among all people. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord give you strength and courage and enable your works to be a blessing to his people, amen. (bells chiming) (bright music) (bright music continues) (footsteps plodding)

- Good heavens. What is this a player on it?

- It's an old piano that hasn't worked for years.

- Huh? Agree, yeah it is a piano. It's real short keyboard.

- Yeah.

- Ah! (footsteps plodding) (distant whistling) (indistinct chattering) (bright music) (indistinct chattering)