

(soft music)

- Good morning, welcome to Duke Chapel, for this first Sunday after Christmas. We're glad to have so many visitors with us today. We've been enjoying the music of Dr. Tom Clark who is a regular here in the chapel. Dr. Clark is not only a physician, but a musician, and he has written many of the instrumental parts for today's service, and his guest musicians with us today, we welcome. Our guest preacher today, is the Reverend Joan Solomon Campbell, an executive of the Philadelphia Presbytery. She is a talented musician and preacher, and it is our privilege to welcome her as our preacher today. Now let us continue our worship.
(soft music) (choir singing)

- The act of praise is number 618, men read regular type, women reading bold face type Glory to God on high.

- And on Earth, peace, good will toward men.

- We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee.

- We glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory.

- Oh Lord God, Heavenly King,

- God the Father Almighty,

- Oh Lord, the only begotten son, Jesus Christ,

- Oh Lord God, lamb of God, son of the Father.

- That takest away the sins of the world,

- Have mercy upon us.

- Thou that takest away the sins of the world,

- Receive our prayer.

- Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father,

- Have mercy upon us.

- For thou only art holy, thou only art the Lord.

- Thou only, oh Christ, with the Holy Ghost art most high in the glory of God the Father, amen.

- Amen.

- Let us pray. Open our heart and minds Oh God, by the power of your Holy Spirit, so that as the word is read and proclaimed, we might hear with joy what you say to us this day, amen. A reading from the Second Book of Samuel. And the three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Now Asahel was as swift of foot as a wild gazelle, and Asahel pursued Abner, and as he went, he turned neither to the right hand, nor to the left from following Abner. Then Abner looked behind him and said, is it you Asahel? And he answered, it is I. Abner said to him, turn aside to your right hand, or to your left, and seize one of the young men, and take his spoil. But Asahel would not turn aside from following him, and Abner said again to Asahel, turn aside from following me, why should I smite you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to your brother Joab? But he refused to turn aside, therefore Abner smote him in the belly with the butt of his spear, so that the spear came out at his back, and he fell there, and died where he was. And all who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died stood still. But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner, and as the sun was going down, they came to the hill of Ammah, which lies before Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon. And Benjaminites gathered themselves together behind Abner, and became one band, and took their stand on the top of a hill. Then Abner called to Joab, shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that the end will be bitter? How long will it be before you bid your people turn from the pursuit of their brethren? And Joab said, as God lives, if you had not spoken, surely the men would've given up the pursuit of their brethren in the morning. So Joab blew the trumpet, and all the men stopped, and pursued Israel no more, nor did they fight anymore. Here ends the reading of the first lesson.

- Let us stand for the Psalm, which is number 590 in the hymnal. Praise the Lord, I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart. (audience speaking) Great are the works of the Lord. (audience speaking) Full of honor and majesty is his work. (audience speaking) He has caused his wonderful works to be remembered. (audience speaking) He provides food for those who fear him. (audience speaking) He has shown his people the power of his works. (audience speaking) the works of his hands are faithful and just. (audience speaking) They are established forever and ever. (audience speaking) He sent redemption to his people. (audience speaking) (soft music) (choir singing) A reading from the letter to the Colossians. Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience. Forbearing one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other. As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony, and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body, and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing Psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Here ends the second reading. A reading from the gospel according to Saint Luke. Now Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was 12 years old, they went up, according

to the custom, and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem seeking him. After three days, they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously. And he said to them, how is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house? And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them, and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and humankind. Here ends the reading of the gospel. (soft music) (choir singing)

- Good morning, I'm gonna say it again, good morning!

Audience: Good morning.

- Better. And season's greetings to all of you. It is a distinct privilege and pleasure to be here in Duke University Chapel this morning to share the word of God with you on this last Sunday in the year 1985. And I've come to offer to you a pause that refreshes. And I'm not talking about Pepsi Cola. Though it is billed as the real thing, I would like to offer to you, the Christian Family of God this morning, the pause that not only refreshes, but renews and restores. And that pause is none other than taking the time to seek forgiveness, and to offer forgiveness. Think for a moment in your minds eye, of the many times this year when you have not been all you could've been, when you were perhaps unkind or quick of tongue, when you were uncaring, and perhaps those times when you did not even realize that perhaps you had offended another. Think also, and perhaps this will be easier for you, of the many times someone offended you, or made you hurt, or uncomfortable, or you wished that you could be perhaps like Samantha on the television, and you could wiggle your nose, and make the irritating person disappear. How many times has that happened, and does that happen in a lifetime? It is appropriate that at the year's end, as we pause to really think how good God has been to us, that we should also place upon our lips these words, dear Lord, forgive. I would ask that you join me in a word of prayer, as we think together on this theme this morning. Let us pray. ♪ If I have wounded ♪ ♪ any soul today, ♪ ♪ If I have caused ♪ ♪ one foot to go astray, ♪ ♪ If I have walked ♪ ♪ in my own willful way, ♪ ♪ Dear Lord, ♪ ♪ forgive ♪ ♪ If I have uttered ♪ ♪ idle words or vain, ♪ ♪ If I have turned aside ♪ ♪ from want or pain ♪ ♪ Lest I offend some other ♪ ♪ through the strain, ♪ ♪ Dear Lord, ♪ ♪ forgive ♪ ♪ Forgive the sins ♪ ♪ I have confessed to thee ♪ ♪ Forgive the secret ♪ ♪ sins I do not see, ♪ ♪ Oh guide me, love me, ♪ ♪ and my keeper be, ♪ ♪ Dear Lord, ♪ ♪ forgive ♪ Let the people of God say amen. There is a beautiful book I want to suggest to you, and hope that you will place it at the top of your reading lists for 1986. It is written by Doris Donnelly, who is a professor at Princeton Seminary, and it is called, Learning To Forgive. In it Doris gives a definition of the word forgiveness. She says forgiveness is part of a process that begins with a hurt and ends as it's final long-range goal, with the event of reconciliation. To be reconciled means to bring together that which belongs together, that which is now apart. It works only however, when we pause, when we take the time to forgive and to be forgiven. Only when we become aware of the depth of the offense

against us, or against others, so that we can forgive with all of our wits about us, and insure a kind of enduring peace, and a move towards true holiness. Most of the time, human beings bypass forgiveness. We rapidly move from our hurts and our emotions to reconciliation, without taking a passing glance even, at what must be forgiven before a lasting healing can really occur. How many times do you remember as a child when perhaps you had a scrap with one of your siblings, and your mother had to be the referee? It happens frequently in my own house, and I have to break the kids up, and I say, "Now it's time to stop fussing, "kiss and make up", or I will say to the boys, "shake hands and be men about this". Or perhaps when someone you love finds themselves at odds, and you know that they're going separate ways, and the best thing we can offer is, hurry and get back together again. But emphasis to often is placed on speed. The quicker we move away from our grief, the better. Better still, don't even notice that you hurt. It is better to pretend you're in control, and you've got it all together, and it really doesn't matter anyway. We think even of the many times, when something happens to us, even in our workaday life, and we find ourselves literally being fired, and when a friend confronts us about it, have you ever heard someone say, I wasn't fire, I quit? No one did anything to me. We don't really acknowledge where it hurts the deepest. To confront our hurts, to face our wounds head on has often been regarded in our society as an embarrassing act of self-serving pity. And grown up together, sophisticated, intelligent, educated people simply don't lick their wounds in public. To bypass forgiveness, spares us the need to do this. If we know something has happened, and we simply go on, and we remain ladies and gentleman about it, and we pretend we're reconciled, that's really all that matters. I might say that perhaps that's also one of the reasons why in many of our churches today across this country, we have put on the facade of being reconciled with one another, but we really have not worked at using the power of forgiveness