

A Message for the Graduates
Proverbs 3:5-6; 14:12; 19:21
June 6, 2010

How many of you have seen the movie, The Blind Side? It's a story about a family who brings a homeless fellow into their home and ends up making him part of their family. It is a truly touching story. I don't mind telling you...I got so swept up in the story that I cried.

Since then, I have come across a few people, particularly at intersections over in Cary or up in Raleigh, who seemed to be in need. However, unlike the family in the movie, I didn't stop my car to find out about their story or offer any needed assistance. As I have reflected more recently on The Blind Side, I have allowed it to challenge me on how I can act differently as a Christian.

You know, it's easy to get swept up in a book or a movie to the extent that we can actually imagine the events of the story taking place...even in our own lives. Thinking back to my English Lit class, I believe the applicable term is *willing suspension of disbelief*. In other words, for the term of the story we are willing to accept as possible just about anything. However, most of the time when we walk out of the theater, we re-enter the real world and leave behind the person the literature was challenging us to become. Unfortunately, that's the way it is sometimes with people in the world; it even happens to those of us who call ourselves Christians.

The greatest piece of literature ever written didn't come from a great playwright like Shakespeare or from the pen of a Hollywood screen writer, it came directly from the mind of God. Of course, I'm talking about the Bible.

The challenge for each of us is to not just let the Word of God be something we agree with on Sunday. For God's Word to make a difference in your life, it must be written on your heart in such a way that it influences the way you live your life.

This morning, I want to lift up for us a few verses from the wisdom literature in the Bible. This is God's wisdom meant for us so that we can live our lives as Kingdom people.

Proverbs 14:12 says, *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.* You who are graduating have certainly encountered a great deal in life already – probably more than I had dreamed of at your age. Perhaps you have already encountered philosophies that illustrate this verse.

One of the most widespread and deceitful is Secular Humanism. It comes at us in many forms. Many times you will hear it in the form of someone encouraging you. They will encourage you to reach down inside yourself...to come to a full awareness of yourself...so that you can be the

person you want to be and achieve what you want to achieve. This sounds great – be all you can be! Right?!

It will also come to you in the form of situational ethics and moral relativism. It will sound very tolerant and peaceful. Ever heard someone say, “Just because it’s not right for me, doesn’t mean it’s not right for them.” The problem with this line of thought is both in what is being said, and in what is not being said.

What exactly is Secular Humanism? It is a philosophy which denies the existence of God, and promotes humanity as the measure of all things. According to a statement from the Council for Secular Humanism, “It’s liberating to recognize that supernatural beings are human creations ... that there’s no such thing as ‘spirit’ ... that people are undesigned, unintended, and responsible for themselves.” What they are saying is that God is a construct of humanity, and that humanity itself is without purpose, accidental in origin and is solely responsible for its own truth.

This mindset is more pervasive and communicated more subtly than most Americans realize. Millions of people have been exposed to a variation of it (and have bought into it) as it has been espoused for over 22 seasons on TV’s longest-running talk show, The Oprah Winfrey Show. Oprah has modified secular humanism into what I call spiritual humanism. People all over the world who watch this woman hear that God is not a deity to be believed in, but a feeling that exists in the experience of some humans. To many misguided people (even some who call themselves Christians) this sounds right. However, there is a way that may seem right to a person, but in the end leads to death – not physical death, but spiritual death.

So, if we are not to trust in ourselves as the ultimate measure of things, then what do we do?

The answer is in Proverbs 3:5-6:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.

To those of you who are graduating high school and going on to college, you will hear many ideas and philosophies from other students and from professors. Seek to remember that they are also only human beings with fallen wisdom and flawed understanding just like every other human being in the world. Listen to what they have to say. Learn from them. Allow them to challenge your mindset. However, keep in mind that there is only One in which you can trust for all Truth – that is the Lord your God. Measure all by His Word. Practice discernment, because as Proverbs 19:21 reminds us, *You can make many plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail.*

No matter what mankind thinks, the Lord will cause His purposes to prevail. So, listen to the words of Jesus: *Anyone who isn't with me opposes me, and anyone who isn't working with me is actually working against me.* (Matthew 12:30) Take care, so that you don't find yourself actually working against God.

Keep your relationship with Christ strong. Use Scripture, the tradition of the Church, your experience of God, and the reasoning ability that the good Lord has given to you to discern whether what the world is telling you lines up with what you know to be Truth. In other words, strive to not let your faith be something that is alive while you are in church on Sunday, and then becomes a matter of indifference in how you live your life during the rest of the week. Allow your Christianity to become part of who you are. With that in mind, as I strive toward a life in Christ alongside you, I hope that the next time I ride down the road and see someone in need, I will act differently than I have in the past...with God's help.