

A Message to the Graduates

Hebrews 13:1-8

Luke 15:11-24

June 7, 2009

This is the season of graduations – high school diplomas and university bachelor and master’s degrees are conferred upon those who are deserving of those honors.

At Sunrise we have two who have earned their Master’s Degree, and one who has completed their Bachelor’s Degree. We congratulate them on their accomplishments.

We also have eleven young people who are earning their high school diplomas – twelve long years of work went into this achievement. It is mostly to these young people that I am speaking this morning; however, I believe these biblical truths are relevant to all of us wherever we may be in life.

To those of you who are graduating high school:

As you leave home for college – even if you are living at home – you will be entering the world in a new way and you will be encountering the spiritual battlefield in a way you haven’t ever encountered it before.

You are leaving the safety of your church and the people who have been in the spiritual battle alongside you.

When an animal leaves one herd in search of another, there is a time before that animal finds the safety and companionship of the new herd. During that time the animal is alone and vulnerable to attack by predators. You will be the same way. There will be a “between time” during which you are vulnerable to attack – a time between which you have left your brothers and sisters here at Sunrise and the time which you find a new Christian community to be a part of. I would encourage you to seek out a church near campus. Seek out the Wesley Foundation ministry. See me and I can tell you where it meets and who the Wesley Foundation minister is.

All freshmen are in the same boat – they are in a new place and need to re-establish their connection to a faith community. This also goes for those of you who are visiting Sunrise having moved from other places. We are glad that you are here, and we hope that you will find this church to be a place that you want to connect with.

If you are like me, the Enemy will tempt you to do things at college that you know are not what a Christian young man or woman should be doing. He will tempt you to stray from the church and from a relationship with Jesus.

It may even work...even if only for a while.

Should you find yourself straying from Christ, I want to remind you of a word of hope.

The story Jesus told of the Prodigal Son, this is your word of hope. Many times after people stray or succumb to temptation they feel unworthy of coming back to their church family or to Jesus. But just like the young man in the story, when you decide to approach the Father with a contrite heart, He will embrace you with open arms.

You won't find him waiting at the door with arms crossed and foot tapping as if to scold you. He will run toward you, arms open. He will put a ring on your finger, a robe around your shoulder and kill the fatted calf, because the one he loves has come home.

As I close, I want to leave you with these words from the author of the Book of Hebrews. They are full of wisdom for a life well-lived.

Hebrews 13:1-9

Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters.

Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!

Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.

Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.

Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have.

Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas. Your strength comes from God's grace....

As you prepare to commence with whatever lies ahead for you, as my father used to tell me, "Don't forget who you are."

And don't forget to call your parents. ☺