

The First Baptist church, Midland
June 6, 2010 – Graduation Sunday
II Corinthians 13:13

It's Up To You From Here...
A Graduation Meditation

Ellen, Kati and Shane... your moment has arrived. On Friday evening, Ellen and Kati, you walked across the stage in Midland High School and received your diplomas. Now you are proud members of the Chemic alumni association. And I understand you two had mixed blessings... Kati, you had Mr. Smith for math and Ellen, you didn't. How did that happen? Anyway, I'll let you two decide who got the better deal. And I won't tell Mr. Smith what you say ☺ And Shane, you graduated from that other school, didn't you? Congratulations on doing so well at Dow High. The good news is you are now forever a Charger. And we're expecting big things from you because you had Mr. Richards for both economics and government. Wow! That's a double dip, and it means you should be able to figure out how to get our government out of the economic mess it's in. If you can't come up with some solutions, I guess we'll have to blame Mr. Richards!

So now we want to know. How was it? Did it feel good to hold that diploma in your hand? Did it feel like you accomplished something significant? I hope so because you certainly did. You completed that first and most important step up the educational ladder and you are now ready to pursue new things at higher levels. And we want to wish you well.

But before we send you on your way, there are just a few things I'd like to say. And I take my motivation from a guy named Dr. Seuss. You've read some of his books by now, I'm sure. And I wonder... are you familiar with the one called *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*

It has been called "a wonderfully wise and blessedly brief graduation speech" and it's fun to read. And the pictures, as always, are great, too. What an imagination.

Now I thought about reading the good Dr's. address to you but then realized that you can read it yourself. And I encourage you to do that. It's inspiring. In fact, I was so inspired when re-reading it earlier this week that I decided to take a crack at what I would call *Seussing*. So with apologies to the master, here goes...

An interesting thing happened earlier this week,
When I knew it was time to go take a peak.
You know... look for those things to be said to the grad
That will make your smile shine and make you feel glad.

I went to this place and then went to that
But nothing was waiting, no dis, der or dat.
So bad I did feel cause I'd nothing to say
So I took to the computer and began pecking away.

You know monkeys, they say, an encyclopedia they'll write
If they keep pushing buttons all through the night.
Now some say I do that every week as it is
And I gladly respond it's just part of the biz!

Now that being said here's something to remember
Be it April or June or May or September.
You've got options before you, so much you can choose.
So I'm telling you, buddy, put on those new shoes.

Start down any street that will lead you from here
And don't worry about it, you need have no fear.
Sometimes you'll succeed, doing better than most
But be careful my dear ones, you don't want to boast.

Sure you'll be up to the challenge as many will say
But be careful, things won't always go fully your way.
Every now and again you may slip and fall
And I'm telling you now you won't feel so tall.

Consider that seed that was planted with haste
Three out of four turned into a waste.
The sun burned one up and the birds ate the other
Then the thorns got the best of still yet another.

But one grew so big cause it fell in good soil
At the hands of the planter who worked hard to toil
And it soon produced more with a trunk ten feet high
As it reached with its branches way up in the sky.

So you see what we learn from this simple story
If you give it your best things will be honkey dory
No, every try won't be perfect and sometimes you'll fail
But more often than not to the stars you will sail.

So you see it's okay because that's how we grow
When we're down we get up, then all the more we will know.
That's why it takes courage to give it a shot
Always doing your best, giving everything you've got.

So that's rule number one as you take leave of this place
Travel safely dear friends, move forward with grace.
But that's not the end of the things I do say
To help you look back on your diploma day.

The next rule says hey there, hi there and ho
There'll always be friends wherever you go.
But you can't just go out on the seat of your pants
And hope somebody out there will ask you dance.

You've got to be friendly and willing to smile
And say to them "Hey, I'll walk you a mile."
By then you'll know this new person by name
And learn things about him (or her) as you enter the game.

Does your friend go for pizza or ice cream or pop
Does she want to be a teacher, an actor, a cop?
Does running a marathon provide much appeal
If you like it to, now you're sealing the deal.

You see the point, don't you, it takes time to be friends
It doesn't just happen but on you it depends.
Speak kindly, share boldly, be tender and care
Give yourself generously if you choose to dare.

It will be worth it, I promise you that
For your friends are worth more than your dog or your cat.
You won't be alone as you travel that road
No matter how heavy it feels under your load.

You know, Jesus once told me I'd be his friend
If to him my heart I would simply lend.
I'll walk with you, talk with you, stick up for you too
With my arm to surround you you'll never be blue.

So you do the same as folks come cross your path
Maybe one, three or seven... you do the math.
You can't have too many friends it is true
The more the better to say *I love you!*

Okay, that's two lessons done so consider a third
I'll sum it all up with one single word...
God!

Now I've got your attention... you're squirming a bit
But try him on, won't you, He's a perfect fit.
He'll be with you always wherever you roam
And he'll make you feel strong when you're far from your home.

He'll love you to death and forgive you for sure
Cause for every dark side he's got just the right cure.
So fall down and get up and reach for His hand
And our Lord will stretch down and lift you to stand.

And while you're at it there's still more to say
You know that friend... try showing him the way.
There's no better gift you can give to that Guy
Whom we fondly say lives way up in the sky.

Than to bring a new life into the circle of love
For our Lord upon her will light like a dove.
Then the angels will sing and they might even dance
Because you've saved a life by taking a chance.

Well, I suppose I should stop cause this rhyme's somewhat silly
And as sermons go this one's a real dilly
But before we end there's one more thing to do
Another responsibility I'm placing upon you.

You know all those people who got you this far
Your mom and your dad, Uncle Chris and Aunt Dar.
Your Sunday School Leader, Scout Master, your doctor
Your neighbor and maybe your own math instructor?

Think about what they've done, what they've given to you
How they've stood by your side and have seen you through.
Go out of your way, go hug em and say
Thank you... I love you... and though it's my day
It's great because you helped to make it that way!

So there you have it... 12 trillion, 3 billion, 4,000 and one
Strokes on the keyboard bringing oodles of fun.
So go on I tell you reach for the sky
Stay close to your friends, say to God do or die

I'll always have faith in your constant care
And I'll carry your story with me everywhere.
By your grace I wander till my journey's end
With the strongest assurance you're always my friend.

Now I'm done with apologies to dear Dr. Seuss
That I've bumbled my way in front of all yours,
Had some fun, made a rhyme, shared a thought with you three
Happy Graduation we now say to thou, you and thee!

Amen, so be it, yes this is the end
I'll say no more so I do not offend.
So thanks for listening to this little story
Now go on, get out and give God the glory!

Oh, one more thing I must say with clear diction
Cause I want to leave you with my favorite benediction...

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
The love of God,
And the communion of the Holy Spirit
Be with you all... (II Corinthians 13:13)*

Amen and AMEN!