

# "Asking on their behalf"

Graduate Recognition

John 17:6-19

May 28, 2006

**I suspect that you will hear a lot of good words of advice and encouragement today. Not wanting to miss the boat, I tried to search for just the right words to share. Some of the best advice came from a familiar scholar and author. I am sure that many of you have read some of his more popular works [scholarly reference material like "Green Eggs and Ham" is hard to forget]. Dr. Seuss's word for you today might include things like this:**

You have brains in your head.  
You have feet in your shoes.  
You can steer yourself in any direction you choose.  
You're on your own.  
And you know what you know.  
You are the guy who'll decide where to go.

- OR -

Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.

I'm not so sure of those words of advice. But there was one that I thought good enough to commend to you today. Though the author is unknown - it is pretty good stuff.

"If at first you don't succeed, do it like your mother told you."

**Each year as we approach the end of May we come to a day like today. Regular as clock work, we face the task of both celebrating with and struggling with the fact that a group of young people from our congregation - from our families have come to a fork in the road. Of course, it is exciting to celebrate your completion of the High School task - it is exciting to imagine the joy of new beginnings / new challenges / new opportunities for each of you. All of those things also make us sad - or at the very least - reflective. We will miss you and we will hope and pray that the new challenges will find you happy, safe and successful.**

**I suspect that too often in the rush of activities - in the midst of all of the changes - in the face of the deep emotions that both you and your families are going through it can be easy not to take the opportunity to talk about how much you are loved and how much your family and friends want to the best for you. So I wanted to say these things in these quiet 'sermon moments' before anything else.**

**Having said that, I would like to shift gears this morning. I always try to address our graduating seniors in the message on Graduate Recognition Sunday - but this**

**morning I decided to take a different approach. You have more than enough listening to do today as many will try to share their thoughts with you. So today I decided to address your families - especially your parents.**

**As I read the Gospel text for today, I could see you who are the parents of our graduates standing with Jesus. Jesus has come to a critical moment. He knows what is about to happen as He shares that last supper with His disciples. {I do not see you facing a cross and crucifixion}. I see you standing with Jesus who is thinking about these very special people with who He has been spending His life - these very special people with whom He has invested so much - in whom He has such great hopes and expectations. He knows that in the future these disciples will be on their own. They are about to be separated and these simple fishermen will have to conquer the world. In some sense Jesus is acutely aware of the fact that He has done all He could to teach them - to prepare them. And He knows that there is no choice in their being left alone - He knows that each of His students must go their way now. Having done all He could, Jesus now does one more thing for these 'little ones' that He loves. Jesus prays for them - Jesus turns them over to God.**

**I ran across a comment by Errma Bombeck that I enjoyed. She said: "Graduation day is tough for adults. They go to the ceremony as parents. They come home as contemporaries. After twenty-two years of child-raising, suddenly they are unemployed." Today you who are parents and families of these graduates are not really unemployed - these young adults will always need you. But today you do stand with Jesus ready to send these that you love out into the world. You have probably known for a long time that, at least for now, you have taught them all that they are ready to learn, you have walked with them as far as you could walk, you have loved them more than they can understand. And now .... you must send them out.**

**How will you do it? How will you let go? How will you deal with the emotions that jump from - I can not let her go - - to - - I can not wait? Jesus prayed. Jesus put them into God's hands. - - - It is not an easy thing to do. I know that it is true because not an easy thing for me and I am only their pastor. It is not easy for us as a church to send our young people out into the world. Maybe it is part of our rural North Dakota mentality that makes us think that at least here at home we have been able to protect our children. At least here, they have been safely separated from the darkness of the world and they have no part in that. Perhaps we are a bit naive and want to believe that here in Bottineau - here at home we can protect them from all harm. We know that that is not the case - but still it is the 'big bad world' that lies beyond the diploma.**

**What can you do when you send them out? What can you do when you can not longer be there by their side to protect and guide? Jesus prayed and knew that the Father's love would surround them because they are His children too.**

**As parents, families, some of you may be God-parents - you brought these young people to the church and you handed them over to God. He claimed them in Baptism and they came here to stand just a few years ago to acknowledge their faith in the Rite of Confirmation. They are the children of God. "All mine are yours," Jesus prayed. All ours are God's as well. Trust God - pray for His protection just as Jesus prayed for His disciples.**

**I will say this to you, who are about to graduate. Hold on to this God who claimed you as an infant and win whom you have professed to have faith. The world will try to take Him from you. I read again this week of a number of cases where judges have ruled against allowing even a student lead prayer at graduation ceremonies. I have read about the protests and the attacks on the faith. You are the children of God - walk with Him - hold fast - you belong to God not to the world.**

**AMEN**