

If You Love God – You Must Embrace Change

Let us pray:

Father, who I am, that you are mindful of me, that you hear me when I call.

Lord, we praise you for your grace, your love and your mighty word.

Father, we thank you for the graduates before us today.

- We honor their hard word.
- We salute their commitment to parents and family.
- We celebrate their dedication to this school.

Lord, we ask your blessings as they, your children, the class of 2015 will go forward:

- To higher education
- To greater successes

And

- To more devotion to you.

Father, Please grant your grace and blessings to the teachers, staff and administration of Wilson Christian Academy for their stewardship of this class.

And Shower your goodness on the parents, grandparents, family and friends that comprised the village that raised these outstanding graduates.

Finally Lord, Please let the words of my mouth and the mediations of my heart be acceptable in your site; as the Power and your Word touch every heart and mind in this place.

And it is in your wonderful son Jesus name, I pray Amen, Amen, and Amen!

It is almost impossible for me to believe that it has been nearly 40 years since I was in your cap, your gown, and your shoes as a high school graduate.

I wish I could tell you all the wonderful things that happened that day.

I wish I could tell you all the outstanding things that were said that day.

I wish I could tell you anything about one of the most significant days of my life. --- But guess what I can't.

--- And you know what? Neither will you!!!

---- And it will not take 40 years for you to forget

---- Yep. Tomorrow will do the trick.

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While I have worked long and hard on the words and message I will share with you today. I am under no illusions that you will remember them!

However, I am confident what you will remember about today are your feelings. Not only today; but over the next several weeks.

- For Today, you may feel happy
- For Today, you may feel excited
- And for today many of you and especially your parents may feel..... relieved!

Those feelings you will not forget. As well as the feelings you have had during your years here at Wilson Christian Academy.

Like you, I remember from my high school, years ago:

The feelings of:

Winning - on the baseball, football and soccer field.

The feelings of:

Losing - on those same fields – including a football game that we lost by a 2-0 score.

And finally.....

The feelings of:

Discovery – Of the wonders of Science, English, Math, Life and oh yes, Girls!

However, the feeling that I remember the most and I think you will agree are the feelings associated with change.

Would you agree with me that Change is very difficult?

And this year you the members of the class of 2015 had to experience a lot of change.

40 years ago my class experienced change as well.

The change we experienced was called integration.

Where our “separate but equal” African-American school was closed. Then, we “integrated” into the all White school.

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In an instant all the traditions, the activities, the way of life that we knew were gone.

We, the newly integrated African-American students were asked to embrace our new school with all the gusto that the White students, who were not forced to give up anything did.

This change also required that we forget about the fact that up until the day we were scheduled to “integrate.”

The good folks of our “new school” did all they could to keep us out.

Class of 2015 – I tell you about this feeling of change not for sympathy or in anger or resentment.

I tell you this because as you the Class of 2015 move from Wilson Christian Academy to the world beyond you will experience change. Some good, some bad and a lot of it will be unexpected.

You will need the Lord and all of His goodness to survive all of this change.

You will need to love the Lord your God with all your heart soul and mind.

And in loving, studying and following God you will discover an important truth:

If you love God you must embrace change.

While it is true that God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

However, when we are saved by the blood of Jesus and give our lives to Christ.....

God will demand change from us.

To the Administration of this great school

To the Faculty and Staff

To the Parents, Family and Friends

And to the Class of 2015 that comprises the 37th graduating class of The Wilson Christian Academy

My brief remarks today are about the challenges that we face in life and the changes that God makes in us to help us meet those challenges.

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The title of this teaching sums up the one piece of advice.

That I want to give to you, the class of 2015

And that advice is:

If you love God – You Must Embrace Change

Change is evident all over the Bible:

In Genesis – God changed the nothing into everything by creating the earth, creating man and creating woman.

---Then man changes everything by messing it up.

In Exodus – God changed the reprobate mind of the Pharaoh.

-- And then demonstrates His mighty power by parting the sea as He releases His people from slavery in Egypt.

In the Gospels: Matthew, Luke, Mark and John: God changes the very nature of His relationship with us by sending His only son Jesus to give us salvation.

Then, God changes death itself as Jesus arose from the grave with all power.

Making it possible for all of us to have everlasting life.

Therefore Class of 2015

Change is intrusive

Change is inevitable

Change is inescapable

In fact you the Class of 2015 are... the change.

This entire ceremony is designed to celebrate the change that is happening in you.

The completion of one phase of your lives and the dawn of another.

--Class of 2015 if you did not like the change that happened to you this year; like I did not like the change that happened to me 40 years ago when I was in high school...

You haven't seen anything yet. ---

Or Bruno Mars says it the song Uptown Funk – “Don't believe me just watch.”

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Class of 2015 Just Watch the changes as some of you go off to college.

Class of 2015 – Just Watch the changes as you find a job, get married, and have children of your own.

Class of 2015 – Just Watch the changes as some of you join our armed forces and go marching off to war.

Don't Believe --- Say it with me Just Watch!!!

However, no matter the challenge, no matter the change, God will be with you.

As Jesus promised in Matthew 28:20 *"I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."*

Class of 2015 Let me stop at this point and suggest 3 things from scripture about Loving God and Embracing the change that He has before us.

First: Change will shape our destiny – And If we are obedient - God will mold that change to our good.

In Genesis – God tells Abram to – Leave his country and go live in a foreign land that he didn't know.

Look at the pain in the mind of Abram this change would cause:

- The fear of living in a different culture, language, traditions.
- The pain of leaving his relatives, his home, his friends behind for good.
- The risk of leaving the security of his home for the unknown place God was sending him to.

But look at the blessings Abraham, received for loving God and embracing the change He brought.

- His name and family would be great.
- God would give him many descendants
- The world would be blessed through him.

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Change will shape our destiny – If we are obedient - God will mold the change to our good.

The Second teaching from scripture about change is:

God anoints us and then test us with change.

Look at the change that God put before Mary

I Read for Luke: 1: 30-34

“Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

34 “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

Now looking back 40 years, the integration of our schools was an anointing from God.

The so called “pain” we felt from giving up school symbols was quickly replaced with the coming together of two pervious separate by equal races for a common cause of inclusion and brotherhood that would have not been possible otherwise.

As the angel of the Lord told Mary, “Our school has found favor with God.”

Class of 2015 God has found favor with you. He has anointed with an education from a Christian school.

And He will put that education to the test:

- When you are faced with the temptation of the world.

He will put that education to the test:

- When it may seem that your prayers go unanswered.

He will put that education to the test:

- When God selects you to be a witness to the lost.

Yes, Class of 2015

Change will shape our destiny – If we are obedient and God will mold the change to our good.

And you better believe Class of 2015 that:

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God anoints us and then test us with change.

So, the third and final teaching I would like to share with you from the scripture is:

God gives us the free will to accept or reject His change.

Matthew 19:16-22 gives us the story of the Rich Man who approaches Jesus and ask “what good thing must He do to obtain eternal life?”

After some discussion Jesus gives the Rich Man a list of things he should not do like

Don’t murder, don’t commit adultery, don’t steal, and don’t lie,

Jesus also gives the Rich man several things he should do; “honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as you do yourself.”

Then, the Rich Man said, “I’ve done all that. What’s left?”

Jesus said: “go sell your possessions; give everything to the poor. Then come follow me.”

As the Message Bible so clearly put it in Matthew 19:22

“That was the last thing the Rich man expected to hear. And so, crestfallen, he walked away. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and he couldn’t bear to let go.

Class of 2015 how many of you have heard of a company called Blockbuster?

Well if you haven’t your parents have: There was a time when almost every corner had a Blockbuster store on it.

Parents, I remember on a Friday night like this back in the day. I would stop by the Blockbuster store pick up a movie, get some popcorn, get some Mountain Dew. Go home get with the Mrs. And we would have a Blockbuster night!!!

Well, at a big meeting of the Blockbuster Big Wigs a young executive was reporting the results of a customer survey. What she found was people generally liked Blockbuster except for three things:

1. Late Fees – folks did not like being charged for bringing back the movie late.
2. Hot New Movies – If a movie was hot the store would only have a few of them.
3. The One Day Rule – If you were lucky enough to get the Hot New Movie you could only keep it one day.

Well the Big Wigs listened to the report and told the young executive – that they would not change a thing. Why?

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First the company made a lot of money on late fees, and second, to stock up with many copies of those hot new movies was impractical.

Crestfallen the executive took her seat. She stayed with Blockbuster for another 2 years. Then she left and started a new company with several other people. That new company Netflix changed the movie renting game. With three changes that Big Bad Blockbuster was unwilling to make:

1. No late fees
2. We always have the hot movie
3. And you can keep any movie you get from us as long as you like

Class of 2015 – Are you the

Rich Man who decided the change Jesus was offering was not worth, giving up all of his stuff?

Class of 2015 Are you Blockbuster, who refuses to change despite your customers' demands.

Or are you Netflix who became the change that needed only because the marketplace demanded it.

Frankly Class of 2015 you are none of those examples.

Class of 2015

You are God's Children

Who's obedient love to the Father is so great that you will allow God to mold the change that will shape your destiny.

Class of 2015: You are God's Children:

Anointed and tested by the Lord to do His will.

Class Of 2015: You are God's Children:

Making the free will choice to love God and embrace the good and perfect changes that He will make in your lives.

Let's us pray: Gracious, heavenly, and wonderful father we thank you for the unchanging God that you are. And the Change that you are bringing to all of our lives.

I humbly ask your profound and plentiful blessings on these your children the class of 2015.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you one and all.

It is in the glorious name of Christ Jesus Name I Pray --- Amen and Amen.