

Good evening, parents, grandparents, family, faculty, staff, Trustees, and graduates: Welcome!

David Brooks, the Op-Ed Columnist for the New York Times, wrote recently: "About once a month I run across a person who radiates an inner light. These people can be in any walk of life. They seem deeply good. They listen well. They make you feel funny and valued. You often catch them looking after other people and as they do so their laugh is musical and their manner is infused with gratitude. They are not thinking about what wonderful work they are doing. They are not thinking about themselves at all. When I meet such a person it brightens my whole day." When I read that description it made me think of you, seniors, and the gift you have been to our CB community.

But, you know, lately the idea of just being ordinary has become a common thread in modern graduation speeches. David McCullough, Jr.'s, commencement speech to the Wellesley High grads in 2012 is now famous—he tells the grads that they are **not** special. He says, "The empirical evidence is everywhere....Across the country no fewer than 3.2 million seniors are graduating about now from more than 37,000 high schools. But why limit ourselves to high school? After all, you're leaving it. So think about this: even if you're one in a million, on a planet of 6.8 billion that means there are nearly 7,000 people just like you."

Well, I'm here to tell you, not exactly. **There is no one who is the same as you.** Your exact genetic makeup, your DNA, **has never existed before you, never, and it will never exist again.** Consider that for a moment. And then consider that Psalm 139 tells us this:

"You formed my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb."

Talk about unique!

I can imagine that the college admission game this past year has quite possibly exhausted some of you, and some likely gave up somewhere along the way. The focus on jockeying for position based on what you have done is daunting and not, in the end, terribly fulfilling because it is a game of constant comparisons. I don't

wish to make light of your very significant accomplishments, but the problem with that game, like so many you'll face in life, is focused on *doing*, not *being*. We often lose our *selves* in the race to achieve.

OK, so now I've quoted the scriptures, Brooks, and McCullough—I guess I should probably bring in a philosopher here—perhaps Kierkegaard or Nietzsche, but instead I think I'll use a song by Rascal Flatts: ☺

“My Wish for You” is really the perfect commencement address. These lines are particularly appropriate to communicate my thoughts and wishes for you:

I hope you never look back, but ya never forget,

All the ones who love you, in the place you left,

I hope you always forgive, and you never regret,

And you help somebody every chance you get,

Oh, and that you find God's grace, in every mistake,

And always give more than you take.

But more than anything, yeah, more than anything,

My wish, for you, is that this life becomes all that you want it to,

Your dreams stay big, and your worries stay small,

You never need to carry more than you can hold,

And while you're out there getting where you're getting to,

I hope you know somebody loves you, and wants the same things too. . .

Yes, seniors, this is my wish. You are indeed special, you are extraordinary, not just because of your remarkable accomplishments, but because of who you are—who you really are as people, at the core, and because of those who love you and those you love. And I *will* quote Nietzsche here: “We love life, not because we are used to living, but because we are used to loving.” Look around you tonight—you are surrounded by love, love of faculty, love of friends, love of dear family, and the love of Jesus, the greatest love of all. This is what transforms - the ordinary confronted with the extraordinary. Look at what the followers of Jesus over the centuries have accomplished—they’ve turned the world upside down. And you can too. “The life you touch for good or ill will touch another life, and in turn another, until who knows where the trembling stops or in what far place your touch will be felt.”

You ordinary, yet special graduates, when you’re out there gettin’ where you’re getting to, go out and become even more extraordinary . . . make us marvel. Astonish us, make us swoon, make us gape – turn your own worlds and the whole world upside down, knowing somebody loves you, and resting in the assurance of the holy presence of God, in Jesus’s presence, because like he said: “Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” And so, graduates, one last time: Live Jesus in our hearts . . . forever!!! Thank you and enjoy this special tribute to YOU, the special class of 2015!!! (play video)