
WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

It is not my practice to preach to anyone specifically (although some of you may think differently).

- And if you do, perhaps GOD has had some important messages for you.
- This week, however, my sermon was prepared with the graduates in mind,
- but I trust that GOD has something to say to all of us. Let me begin.

My dear seniors, after four long years we stand at the crossroads of the future.

- Today, as we graduate, we...
- Sorry. Wrong message. I got confused with something I heard the other day.

Actually, this time is a crossroads for those graduating,

- and one that many others here have already passed.
- Moving more fully into adulthood.
- Moving off on your own.
- And whether you seniors do so now or at some point in the future, one way or another, each of you, as so many of us already have, are leaving home.

Leaving home can be an exciting thing.

- To be off, making your own decisions.
- No longer having to follow the house rules.
- No more having to do what the parents say you have to do.

Yet, not everything the adults in your life told you to do were bad things.

- When I moved out, there were things my parents had said or done that I was determined never to say or do.
- However, today I find increasingly that in many ways, I have become my father.
 - And I will admit that sometimes, that is a bad thing.
 - But at other times, many times, it is actually good.

Mark Twain would say, “when I was 16, I couldn’t believe what a fool my father was,
- but by the time I was 21, I was amazed at how much he had learned.”

The teachings of parents and other adults are anchors for our lives.

- They are compasses that keep us on the right course.

I am always amazed by the young people who seem to believe that they know so much more than the adults in their lives who,

- first of all, have traveled down the same road and faced the same choices, and
- secondly, love those young people they are directing so very much.

Still, most of us know that it is an exciting time when we leave home and move out on our own.

- Yet away from home can be a dangerous place.
 - On the one hand, you have freedom and independence.
 - On the other, you will be confronted with temptations and lies.

A high school diploma is an important achievement.

- All the awards won in high school are significant.
 - But, as a friend of my daughter, Rebekah, pointed out, “The day after graduation, they don’t mean a thing.”
- You are starting over.
 - New classes in college or trade school.
 - New jobs and careers.
 - New opportunities and experiences.
 - And again, new short cuts and temptations.
 - But, giving into a little temptation wouldn’t hurt, right?
 - Yet, how do you know when you’ve gone too far?
 - Unfortunately, too often, you find out when it’s too late to undo the damage.

Nevertheless, even away from home, you can take your compass and your anchor with you to guide you and keep you away from danger.

When I went away to college, I was done with church.

- My parents had made me go, but now I was free.
- I was going to sleep in late on Sunday mornings and spend my day as I wanted.
 - After six weeks, though, I found that I needed to go back to church,
 - not for my parents, but for myself.
- This was when I learned to tell myself something, and that I also tell my own children,
 - “Remember who you are, and remember WHOSE you are.”

Verse 20 from Paul’s letter to the Galatians says, “It is no longer I who live, but it is CHRIST who lives in me.”

- To be baptized into CHRIST means to live in CHRIST,
 - and to live in CHRIST is to be always home.

How many of you are baptized in CHRIST?

- That means that you live in CHRIST wherever you are.
 - I live in CHRIST in the city of Long Beach.
 - I work in CHRIST at St. Andrew Lutheran Church.
 - I walk in CHRIST in the neighborhood of Belmont Shore.
 - I relax in CHRIST on our front patio.
 - Wherever I go, wherever any of us who raised our hands go, we live in CHRIST.

A group of American Christians were visiting a village of Christians in Africa.

- As the evening began, they went around the circle to introduce themselves.
- The Americans gave their name and then said something about their family or their job.
- The Africans though introduced themselves by giving their name and then, to a person, they said, “and I am a child of CHRIST.”
 - Their identity was not based on where they dwelt or on what they did.
 - Their identity was focused on the fact that they lived in CHRIST.

As you graduates go out into the world, you may be tempted to lower your standards.

- You may want to take shortcuts to achieve certain things.
- You may surrender your values to gain some short-term goal.
 - When you feel those temptation, I want to encourage you to say, "No, I live in CHRIST."

More than this, I want you to know that you live in the power of CHRIST,

- the power to make a difference in your own life and in the lives of others.
- Because you live in CHRIST, you can speak out against injustice.
- Because you live in CHRIST, you can sit down with those who others would cast out.
- Because you live in CHRIST, you can welcome those who do not know hospitality.
- Because you live in CHRIST, you can bring hope to those who seem to have no future.
- Because you live in CHRIST, you can build bridges between the rich and the poor,
 - between the young and the old,
 - between the female and the male and gay and the straight and those who identify otherwise,
 - between the white and the black and the brown and the yellow and the red and everyone in between.
- Because you live in CHRIST, you can bring peace to those who live in turmoil.
- Because you live in CHRIST, you can set free those who live in the prison of guilt or shame for their sin,
 - and help them find their own new home in CHRIST.
- Because you live in CHRIST, you can make this world more into the world that GOD intended it to be.

No matter where you go,

- no matter what you do,
- no matter the challenges you face,
 - you will always have a home in CHRIST.

You know who you are.

More importantly, you know WHOSE you are.

- And you know where you live,
 - so that you can always say to yourself and to others.
 - Say it with me. Where do you live? "I live in CHRIST!"