

Commencement Address – August 2020

My dear graduates,

As we end our Commencement, let me leave you with these words from the letter to the Romans 12:2:

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Our world desperately needs you to shine the light of Jesus on it – to hold strong and to fight for Character, Truth, and Wisdom.

Allow me to give you one last lesson as one of your teachers.

For the time you have been here at Oakdale, we have taught you to be prepared for a life of service to God, family, community, and country.

Now, more than ever, we are in need of you to choose that life of service.

Today, in our country, we are told we are more divided than perhaps at any time since the Civil War.

We are also told that the debates and arguments that rage across this land are about – according to both sides of the political aisle – freedom.

Freedom, by etymology, comes from the Old English to be free from a state or territory.

Today, though, freedom is not what we are fighting about.

We are told that churches and schools had to be shut to save lives, but the abortion mills across our land remained open, killing thousands upon thousands of innocents.

We are told we must not only reject parts of our history that are bad, which there are of course, but we need to erase those parts by tearing down statues, defacing monuments, and wiping memories away.

We see the tearing down of statues now to Christian missionaries who dared to spread our faith.

We see a movement where it is now considered freedom to shoot fireworks and throw bricks at police officers sworn to defend us.

We are told any disagreement with any of these and many other radical ideas is wrong. As a matter of fact, you run the risk of being labeled a racist, a bigot, and an intolerant person if you do not follow suit in your words.

My dear graduates, *that* is the world you are entering.

That is the world we are charging you to go in and serve.

Those are the popular views on our college and university campuses that you will soon move to this fall.

Normally, we would move to a Socratic dialogue about how we each respond to this, but I will let you off the hook on this last lesson.

However, the lesson continues as you move out of high school. You will have to answer these and many other challenges throughout your lives now.

Let me point out this one thing. All of these so-called freedoms are not freedom at all.

To force belief and an agenda is the opposite of freedom – it is slavery.

That is what our world is struggling through – a true battle over freedom.

Let me share with you what true freedom really is.

I am God's child.

I have been justified; I am united with the Lord, and I am one with Him in spirit.

I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.

I am complete in Christ.

I am assured that God works for my good in all circumstances.

I am free from any condemnation brought against me and I cannot be separated from the love of God.

I am confident that God will complete the good work He started in me.

I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.

I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.

I am a branch of Jesus Christ, the true vine, and a channel of His life.

I am God's temple.

I am God's workmanship.

I may approach God with freedom and confidence.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

That, my dear graduates, is true freedom.

Our God chose to save us. For He so loved the world that he gave His One and Only Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but shall have eternal life.

True freedom is to surrender to the Truth of God's Word.

I ask and encourage you to go forth into this world as ambassadors for Christ, sharing the true freedom found only in Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The lesson is over – now you must carry it out.