



Third Day Living Beyond Graduation Day

Biblical Text: Matthew 28:16-20

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Together we have been claiming this spiritual truth... * ***“The worst thing is never the last thing!”*** And each week we’ve looked at some practical application, some tough time or transition. And today is the last week in the series. Some of you might be tempted to add, ***“thanks be to God!”***

But every single week someone has said: ***“That message spoke to me. It helped.”*** Today’s topic is * **Graduation Day**. And Charles Dickens’ words surely apply, * ***“It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.”***

Well, not the worst of times, it’s one of the best. There is celebration, accomplishment, excitement for a new journey! But there also is saying goodbye, *“what to do with the rest of your life,”* getting a job, and paying your own way. (Parents - those two are for you.) There is life beyond graduation.

And there are some things to remember. First of all, none of us has to have it all figured out right away. And second, remember it’s not your first rodeo! There have been other graduations! *Preschool, *Kindergarten, *Grade School, *Middle School. And it probably, likely won’t be your last.

There could be *College, or some *other path, *or Graduate School, or even a Doctorate. Hey – I’m living proof. I’ve had more graduations than I can remember. Been there, done that, **got the hood and cap to prove it.**

None were that easy. Ask Ann. I set a school record with my doctorate - not a good one. I was matriculated fourteen years before I finally finished it. They call it a terminal degree because it almost kills you. Ann says no way. It almost killed her. Or she almost killed me. **It could have gone either way!**

Along the way, Ann introduced me to another doctor - *Dr. Seuss (*also known as *Theodor S. Geisel.*) She knows his *books by heart. They make great graduation presents! Like *Oh, the Places You’ll Go, or my favorite, *On Beyond Zebra! I opened a *worn copy this week and looked inside. *

There’s a ton of fun there, and a whole other alphabet he invented to remind us to keep on going and creating. The end is not the end!

He invented letters like *Nuh, *Wum, *Yekk, *Floob, *Itch, and my personal favorite - *Spazz - **which redeems one of my Grade School nicknames for me!**

So why a Preschool Book on Graduation Sunday? For this quotation:

**“So, on beyond Z! It's high time you were shown, *that you really don't know all there is to be known!”* And that, of course, is a message for us all.

And right on cue, living proof in the culture, among the college graduates this week was *NFL Hall of Fame football player Bobby Bell, who graduated from college at the age of 74! We never graduate from learning. Ever.

If you wonder what any of that has to do with our text, open your Bibles.* **Matthew 28:16-20** is a great text for Ascension Day and Graduation Sunday. I think we often wonder, *“What do I do with the rest of my life?”*

The disciples certainly did. Jesus had always been with them, other than when he was in the tomb, to guide the way. When they first thought it was over, there came the third day - and lots of days with him after that.

But they are way past that here. They learned so much after the Resurrection! Our text is Jesus final **“Commencement Address”** for those who follow him.

* ¹⁶ **Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, *to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.** No real news here. One of them didn't make it to graduation. But Jesus always went to the mountain when he had something important to say.

* ¹⁷ **When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.** That describes most Church gatherings I know. But Jesus didn't ask anyone to leave the room!

* ¹⁸ **And Jesus came and said to them:** He spoke to all of them, and to all of us.

* **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”** Notice that he didn't give up his authority to Matthew, Dr. Luke, John (his favorite,) or even to Simon Peter. He is Savior and Lord of all our lives. There is no higher authority.

His instructions for them and us are simple and profound. Easy to remember. And hard to do faithfully. He reminds us to keep the main thing the main thing:

* ¹⁹ **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...** Our mission is not in here **with** him, but out there **for** him. Sharing his story, and living his story, at work, home, ball games, graduations, in KC, and around the world.

* **“Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...”** There is nothing about what age, or method we use. Nothing here about who is *“our kind of people.”* We are to bring people in and welcome them in his name.

* ²⁰ ***“Teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”*** We are to follow him, always seeking to live his way, and teach others to do the same.

* ***“And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”***¹ That’s the best news of all in this passage. We are not on our own. He is with us, always.

We have lots of different careers, but only one job as Christians. There are lots of dimensions to following Jesus, but none more important. We won’t all be professional ministers or work in a Church. My prayer is that some of today’s graduates, or maybe someone here today will. Jesus needs you!

But here’s the thing. He needs us all. In whatever path, school, job, career, retirement plan, or future you step into tomorrow... He needs you!

Will following his **Great Commission** be easy? No, not always! But it’s not called the **Great Suggestion** for a reason. But sometimes it will be great. I promise!

When it’s not, remember: ****“The worst thing is never the last thing!”*** Remember what I said last Sunday: ****“The last thing is never the best thing!”*** And this message for today: ****“Even the best thing is never the last best thing!”*** That belongs to God.

When you look back one day, when any of us do, it won’t be money, or days in our career, we count or think is most important - or possessions, or children and grandchildren. *(Well, honestly, we probably will count them.)*

I do think we’ll wonder, ***“What did I do that mattered?”*** Jesus was clear. **It’s people that matter.** They matter to God. And because they do, his words were equally clear: * **Make Disciples. Baptize and Teach. I will be with you.**

Feel a little inadequate to do that job, to live up to his expectations? Join the club. I do. Lots of days. You probably will too. **But Jesus didn’t think so.**

This is what he said in John 14:12: **(Open Bible)* ****“In fact, they will do greater works than these, because I go to the Father.”*** ****...greater works.***

And here’s a graduation day Bible verse to put along side of it, from I Timothy 4:12: * ***“Let no one look down on you because you are young...”***

But it’s not just a message for them. ***“Let no one look down on you because you are young...”*** To that, you can add these words: * ***...or middle aged, ...or even older, ...or male, ...or female, ...or going to college, ...or something else.***

You are a child of God, a follower of Jesus.

* **And like his Word, HIS WORK is for you - and for all of us - to do! Amen.**

¹ Matthew 28:16-20, *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.*