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St. John's Lutheran Church – Kimball, NE
Baccalaureate Service
May 4, 2014
Text: Readings

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Dear graduating seniors of 2014, family and friends, greetings and welcome to St. John's Lutheran Church. It's a great privilege to celebrate with you in anticipation of your graduation on May 17th. Today, we gather together to hear God's Word, offer prayers, sing, and to give thanks to our Lord Jesus for bringing you to this point in your lives. This is a time for celebrating. Well done!!

Twelve years of preparation have brought you to this point in your lives. During those years, you have, to one degree or another, focused on the great works of God revealed in mathematics & science, history, grammar & philosophy, literature & language, art & music, and so forth. Psalm 111:2–3 declares, "Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them. Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever." A life of learning unmistakably and unavoidably encounters the great works God.

When God created mankind, He endowed us with the ability to use His knowledge and gifts for the good of all people, to seek out the depths of truth, to embrace that which is beautiful. From the very beginning, God called us to faith in Him, to trust Him above all things, to love Him as the highest good. The wise, educated man or woman seeks godly knowledge and faith in order to participate in all of God's gifts. Those gifts have prepared you for the days ahead.

Your class motto is *Carpe Diem*, seize the day. It's a Latin phrase typically used as an encouragement to make the most of every opportunity, to take chances and be bold in whatever lies at hand. Though I have no insight into why your class chose this particular saying, I was exceedingly pleased to learn this was your choice.

The phrase originally came from the Latin poet Horace in 23 B.C. The complete Latin phrase, taken from Horace's *Odes* (1.11) is "carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero". It can be translated "seize the day, trusting as little as possible to the future."

It's a curious phrase. Does it mean "do what you can today to be happy because tomorrow may bring tragedy?" Or, does it mean "do what you can today in preparation for tomorrow"? It's really an important question, for depending on how you understand your class motto, it could lead you to reckless frivolity or purposeful virtue.

On May 18, the day after your graduation, how will you "seize the day" that constitutes the rest of your life? I realize that I'm asking you one of the big questions in life. But I suspect you've already been wrestling it to one degree or another. Do I continue in collegiate studies? Vocational training? Enter the full-time workforce now or later? And when I do, in what capacity? And then there's joy and honor of marriage and family. That may soon be your calling.

I can't give specific answers as to how you should seize those days of opportunity. But the Scripture readings for today's service do give divine guidance as to how you should go about seizing the rest of your life.

Solomon, the author of Proverbs 3, writes, "My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you" (vs. 1-2). To seize the day of long life and peace is to embrace God's commandments for they guide one in the way of virtue, truth, and nobility. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" says Solomon, "and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (vs. 5-6). Trust and dependence upon God lead to a true and certain future. So I might ask you, Is that the day you will seize upon?

The apostle Paul encouraged his Christian readers in Colossians 4:5 to "walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time." For the apostle Paul, wisdom is the path to seizing the day for it makes the best use of time. Wisdom is more than possessing knowledge. It's the ability to use knowledge to achieve the best, most virtuous outcome possible. Is that the day you will seize upon?

According to the Lord Jesus, in Matthew 6, life is more substantial than mere external things like food, drink, clothing, or even your own body. These things are important but not the most important. And besides, our heavenly Father gives these things to us because of His great love for us, says our Lord. Are you not more valuable than birds of the air whom the Father feeds? Are you not more precious to the Father than the flowers of the field which He clothes in radiant splendor every Spring and Summer?

Jesus says yes, you are of much more value than these things. Your Father will provide your necessary daily provisions.

Jesus calls us to something greater than simply being concerned over these things, as important as they are. Instead we are to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (vs. 33).

To seize the day according to Holy Scripture is to order your life according to higher priorities: God’s kingdom, the pursuit of His righteousness, the fear of the Lord, delight in God’s great works, and confidence in the Father’s gracious providence in all the affairs of this life and the life to come. Such is the good life according to the Bible. Seize that day, graduates!!

Today we celebrate with you. Kimball graduates, you have reached one significant milestone. Congratulations and job well done. But your life of learning, wisdom, and virtue is just beginning. May the wisdom and power of God revealed most especially in His Son Jesus Christ, bless and prosper you in this life and in the life to come. Carpe diem, seize the day!!

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.