

2017 Graduation Address

by Vincent Howard

Thank you, seniors, for singing those verses. I asked these guys to sing, because I don't know when I'll get to hear them sing again, and I'm going to miss their voices. I also asked them because what they sang is what I want to say to you seniors tonight. If you remember one thing you hear tonight, I want it to be this: In Christ, you are not forgotten. God knows your name.

The song says this truth so well, in such a simple and memorable way, that I think I can just sit down. Done. OK, maybe I should stay up here and explain why I think this message is so important for you guys, and why it can be so hard to hold onto.

Here's why. We live in a world that tells us to forget God's name and strive for our own name, our own honor. And we live in a world where we stick names on each other, and ourselves, and we can spend a lifetime running from these names. But the Gospel tells us that only one name really matters, the name we have in Christ, a name we can only receive when we stop striving and stop running.

So let's talk about these three names in the short time we have tonight: the names we strive for, the names we run from, and the name we have in Christ.

Seniors, there is going to be homework. Yes, I will post it on the Google Classroom. This homework will require you to read--of course! You might think you can fool me. But I can tell who has actually done the reading, who flat out didn't do the reading, and who has [ahem!] read the Sparknotes summary.

The Names We Strive For

First, let's talk about the names we strive for. These are the titles, the honors, the medals. Tonight is all about these kinds of names. Look around you: We meet in a room lined with banners bearing the names of athletes who set records, won championships, and earned medals. Seniors, in a few minutes, you will hear your names called, and you will come forward to receive your diplomas, a title you need to get into college. Some of your names will be called to receive the highest academic honors.

Tonight we celebrate your honors. But let's be real. Behind all such honors, is a fear. Right now, you may be wondering, "how will I be remembered by my teachers and underclassmen?" "What will they say when my name comes up?" Seniors, whether or not our ambition is to make a famous name, don't we all share the same

fear: the fear of being forgotten? This fear drives some of us to raise our voices or act out to be noticed. But even the most timid among us wants to live on in someone's memory. Inside, all of us want to believe, "I am not forgotten."

And here is where we often go wrong. The story of Babel, in Genesis chapter 11, tells us how. This, by the way, is your first homework assignment. If you've read it, that's OK. Read it again. It's only 9 verses long.

Babel is a story about a group of young people who come together to start a corporation. They are smart and ambitious. They have degrees from Stanford, Harvard, MIT, Cal. Tech--OK, maybe not. But they have the latest technology. Forget 21st century skills. They have 30th century skills. 30th century B.C. This was the world's first startup, and they were thinking big, very big. They were thinking globally: Genesis says they "had one common language."

"Come on, let's build a city for ourselves," they said. Forget the Googleplex. Forget the World Trade Center. We need a tower "with its top in the heavens." This is going to be the tallest skyscraper--ever. And here is the key moment in the story: "Let's make a name for ourselves," they said. And as soon as it launched, the world's first startup crashed. It failed so famously that we are still talking about it today. The name Babel means confusion. And that's the state in which this story ends.

Babel is a story about being careful: careful with our projects; careful with our dreams; careful about what we strive for. It is also a story about remembering: remembering God; remembering that we are not God. When we forget His name, and strive for our own name above all, we always find that we are under a curse. And that's the next kind of name I want to talk with you about tonight.

The Names We Run From

So, first we looked at the names we strive for. Now, second, let's look at the names we run from. See, I believe, that when we are striving to make a name for ourselves--when we are trying to get our own honor--we are often doing something else at the same time. We are running. What do I mean?

I think few stories show this as powerfully as the story of Rocky. Some of you watched this movie with me in Bible & Film class. But, seniors, I want you all to watch this movie--again. This is your second homework assignment.

Rocky is a movie about a young boxer, but this movie is not really about boxing--not to me, anyway. Rocky is a story about names. It's about the names we strive for, but more than that, it's about the names we run from. Throughout the movie, people mock Rocky. They call him "creepo" and "meatbag." But there is one name he can't forget: "bum." Even when Rocky gets a shot at the world heavyweight title, this name still haunts him. The night before the big fight he confesses to his girlfriend, Adrian, that he is not really fighting for the title. He just wants to "go the distance" and stay on his feet long enough to prove he's not a "bum." And here's the thing. Rocky does go the distance. When the bell rings after twelve rounds, he's still on his feet. End of story, right? Wrong. If you watch the sequels, you will see that Rocky spends the rest of his life trying to prove himself. Fight after fight, title after title, he never stops running from the "bum" he is afraid he will become.

"Rocky is just a movie," you may be saying to yourself. "Sure," Mr. Howard likes it, "but what does it really have to do with me?" Maybe more than you think. Have you ever been labeled with a name you hated? Have you ever stuck a name on yourself? It's funny how hard it can be to make those names come unstuck, especially if there is some truth to them.

"Loser," "punk," "poser," "drunk," "burn-out," "drop-out"--these were names people stuck on me in high school. And they have haunted me ever since. Even after I made it through high school--which seemed like a minor miracle to my teachers--I couldn't shake the feeling that I was almost a "drop-out." I couldn't forget all the time I'd spent in principals' offices on discipline in middle and high school, or sitting in jail cells and courtrooms and rehab programs.

But after making it through college, then graduate school, and then becoming a teacher, I finally proved I was not a "loser," right? Wrong. Even now, I have days when the old names haunt me. And in my mind I start running. But Revelation tells us that in Christ we each will receive a new name to replace these old names. I know that I am not forgotten. God knows my name. So now when I run, I remember Christ, and I run to him. This brings us to the third kind of name we need to talk about tonight.

The Name Above All Names

We've seen that there are names we strive for, and names we run from, now let's talk about the only name that really matters: the name above all names. Because at this point, you might be thinking, "Yeah, yeah, Mr. Howard, I got it. I've heard this before. I just need to remember Jesus when I'm feeling prideful or insecure." Well, there's more to it than that. We need to

remember what makes Jesus' name so great--especially to us.

I have one more homework assignment for you, the shortest one yet. I want you to read the first four verses of Hebrews. This is the history of the world in one paragraph. And history comes down to one man, one name, Jesus Christ.

Through this one man, God created the "universe," says Hebrews. He is "the radiance of God's glory." And yet he gave up his glory and honor and power for us. He took a name of shame, our name. That is the secret, the plot twist in this story, the one story, the story of history.

The name of Jesus is the greatest name because Jesus did something that we can't do. Just like Rocky, we want to be strong, and great, and clean, to free ourselves from the shame of feeling, deep down, like bums. But we are trapped by our sin. In our sin, we will always be bums. But Jesus Christ freed us from sin. On the cross, he took a name that was cursed by the men who killed him. On the cross, the most cursed things imaginable came at him with all their strength. He faced them, absorbed their sting, and emptied their power. This fight cost him his life. But it won your eternal lives back.

And just as he rose from the grave with a name more glorious than before, so will we. Hebrews tells us that, after "he made purification for sins," Jesus Christ "sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven." And he invites us to join him, bums no longer. We don't have to build a tower up to heaven to try and make a name for ourselves, as they did at Babel. Heaven came down to us. We are not forgotten. God knows our name.

Listen, there is nothing you can do to earn this name. We live in a city where people are dying from overwork, where striving to prove yourself is the norm. But whether we live in Japan or in America, where standing out and making your mark is everything, the name we're all seeking after is an illusion. It won't last. Ecclesiastes reminds us that even our heroes and celebrities are made not of iron and gold but of dust. On our own, we will all be forgotten. But when we live out of the power of Christ's name, we have a name of honor that will last forever. You can finally stop striving. You can finally stop running. You are not forgotten. God knows your name.

Seniors, I can't tell you how your classmates and teachers will remember you. But I can give you a small picture of how I will remember you. I have written a

collection of poems. Each poem begins with one of your names. I hope that these poems might remind you, in some small way, of how in Christ your name will never be forgotten.

Kaori,
I had no idea how much of a dancer
You really were
Until this year,
When I saw you move without fear
Beneath the stage lights,
Taking a silent crowd to new heights.

Naofumi,
Mos def,
For senior year, you still get an "F"..
An "F" for CAJ's Freshest Footwear.
I know you know there is more out there
Than Forces, Jordans, KDs, and checkered Vans.
Buy the Truth. Don't get scammed by life's knock-off brands.

Changhyun,
I'm going to miss the hungry way you take the mic
At every talent show, letting all the heads know.
Lightning in the night: That's what your rhymes hit like.
So here's one last rhyme back atcha before it's time to go.

Jacob,
When I told you I liked lo-fi, your eyes
Bugged out like you were being exorcised.
My man, you are a truly lyrical,
spiritual miracle individual.

Lena,
Don't let your mind sleep. Let your pen always think.
Let it link all the pictures of your life with ink.
If those pictures stink, then use your words like a knife
As you cut away the past and carve a beautiful life.

HoSu,
Dramatic gestures are what you were born to do.
Our world needs people like you
Like desserts need rain and the sky needs blue.
Even skies can fall, but God is a rock you can hold onto.

Julia,
Here's one thing that will always impress me:
When you had to end sophomore year early
And go back to Canada for your sister's wedding,
You missed the exam for a Midsummer Night's Dream.
But you made a video of you acting every part in your scene.

What really set the mood, though, was your dad's wild fairy dancing.

Jeremy,
In class, you always looked at me
like what I said was wrong.
But it didn't take me long
To see that your skepticism and foresight
Came from a true desire to make a wrong thing right.

John,
You are the Obi-Wan
Of freestyle debate.
Your Jedi mind is never too late,
Using the Force, checkmating Rebel haters,
Levitating over saber-swinging Vaders.

Manami,
You are an INTP.
I am an INFP.
You are the me
I would like to be
If I could get free
Of this F and be,
Like you and Sherlock, a T.

John,
Your stories
Floor me.
They're more than gory.
In broken lives, they find beauty.
They help me see
Through the lies of the enemy
To some kind of glory.

Jiwon,
Your duet with your sis
Is something I will miss.
On the stage, you sing with the voice of an angel.
On the field, you strike with the claws of a Bengal.

Taka,
One: your rank as an artist--way beyond fine.
OK: never settle for this state, now or anytime.
Rock: what your drawings do to my mind.

Yeji,
You sang "I Dreamed A Dream," took our hopes up high,
Proof that music can make life worth living,
Can make us dream that love will never die,
Can make real our dream that God could be forgiving.

Nanami,
I love that, just for fun, you read War and Peace.
At over one thousand pages, you tamed a beast--

Kind of like the clever mouse in *The Gruffalo*,
the story you did for the speech fest, “didn’t you
know?”

Byungjun,
You are a master of meditation.
You had that look of deep contemplation,
Like a priest in a mass,
Many times in the middle of class.
Your classmates would whisper, “he looks sleepy.”
But they didn’t see the wonders that I see.
I knew each day you pondered a new mystery,
So it pained me to say, “Byungjun, can you hear me?”
I hated to call you back from that profound reality.

HaEun,
You’re probably the hardest worker I know.
Always moving, like the ant in the fable.
Harvest is here and you’re headed to Keio.
But when the load gets heavy, know it’s God who is
able.

JuSun,
When sixth period English class got sleepy,
You brought warmth and light and energy.
Remember to shine on your friends on those cloudy
days.
Your laughter reaches out like the brightest of rays.

Josiah,
Servant of the Secret Fire,
Wielder of the Flame of Anor,
Welder of our worship spire,
Your quiet valor rivals any Valar.

Emma,
Your sense of humor
Crept up on me slow,
Like a cat in slow-mo.
What the future holds in store,
I do not know, though
I hope you pounce on your dreams, don’t let them go.

Angie,
Face to face, you seem so unassuming.
But I have seen the toughness you bring
To your courageous work as a writer.
You swing sentences and phrases like a fighter.
I know the shadows will never get the best of you.
Your honesty on the page is something I aspire to.

Emily,
You breathe life into character after character:
Jeram, Telaine, Mr. Who, The Fairy Godmother,
The wise Grandma in *You Can’t Take It With You*.
Don’t lose your love for stories, whatever you do.

Josh,
You could play any sport on any given day,
And sing any song we could throw your way,
And make it look cooler than the rest of us.
Your range comes straight from God, and He’s the one
to trust.

Caroline,
Your voice is a paradox:
Your sarcasm bites like hungry crocs,
But your singing stops the hands on the clocks.

Erika,
Seeing you sing a duet with your dad on strings
Made time stop for me: those notes had wings.
I pray the bond you two share stays true hereafter.
You gave me an ideal to shoot for with my own
daughter.

Serene,
Take every
New day as a new story.
In small things, find the touch of glory.
Even when it’s boring, life is never nugatory.

Sophia,
I have grown from reading the observations of your
thoughtful mind.
You uncovered meanings not many would find
As you explored everything from song lyrics to movies.
I’ll miss your insights. They are as strong as UVs.

Honoka,
I’ve seen you be there for your friends
Enough times to know that you are loyal.
For some, being there for our peeps depends.
But you hang tight like roots deep in the soil.

Maria,
I won’t forget how your eye finds the angle:
The cause to take on, the problem to untangle.
Don’t forget that through service comes real power.
Don’t forget the meaning of Chan’s plastic flower.

Tristin,
There’s always surprises when I’m with you,
Like your impression of Hachiko the dog statue,
The video where you played Byungjun’s son,
The times you’ve showed up at my door, the hours
random.

Take,
I don’t know what I taught you, but you taught me
The meaning of *natsukashii*:
The secret of poetry.

Seth,
A prophet, you exhale truth like breath.
Though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
Keep your heart free, your head up, and your eyes clear.
The Lord is your helper. Who should you fear?

Chie,
With ink, pencil or face paint, your work is top shelf.
But you have quiet grace, don't draw attention to yourself.
Same story when you are teaching children English.
To be as kind and sharp as a teacher, is my wish.

Kevin,
The look in your eyes has always made me unsure:
Do I see the world-weary gaze of a philosopher
Or the up-all-night glaze of an marathon gamer?

Takara,
Your answers to me
Were always rarely
More than "yes," "no,"
"Um, I guess so."
Then I saw how you speak.
You share ideas with your cleats.

DoYeon,
You are a thinker, a true intellectual.
Whether it's Malcolm Gladwell's 10,000 hour rule,
Hamlet and the Nature of Good and Evil,
Or the action-movie detective Seo Do Cheol,
I admire how you take your thinking to the next level.

Keziah,
Your smile has always seemed unbreakable.
Come what may, your poise is unmistakable.
I have seen the years give you a wiser will,
And stress no doubt, but your smile is unbreakable still.

Amy,
Your heart has room for serves and saves,
The way a guitar turns the air into waves,
Room for lost kids you haven't met--yet--
Cousins walking shadowy paths in Cali.
You're like light in an alley, peace in a valley.

Lisa,
You say you want to be a nurse one day.
I have seen how your calm and gentle way
Heals hurts. I say you are a nurse today.

Timothy,
At first, we might not know you're there.
You deal in gentle power, like air,
Like The Spirit, like a listening ear.

Teruyo,
It can't be ezay
Being pulled between Japan and VA.
I hope you find the place you're meant to stay.
But first, take yourself a well-earned vacay.

Sia,
When you have the mic you own the stage.
Your voice brings stories right off the page.
Your power over words is a gift you take with you.
Use that power to stand for the noble and the true.

Mish,
Be careful with your charm.
Remember that too much can do real harm.
I hope you keep your head and find the right match.
Maybe she can get your back in our rap battle rematch.

Kaito,
Chasing you is like chasing an arrow.
To me,
You will always be
The fastest man in Kanto.

Jonah,
Of fake wisdom be wary:
The real wisdom of the ages
waits in ink for you to find.
Keep John Piper's library,
with its countless sages and pages,
like a diamond in your mind.

Mocha,
The day you showed me
Your book dedicated to Disney,
I saw that your creation
Was a work of pure imagination,
An undeniable sign
Of your talent for design.

Reiko
Prayer is the weapon you wield
In your war room. Keep faith. Stay free
From the grip of the enemy.
Joy is your shield. Kneel. Never yield.

Yui,
I have never seen you not smile.
But I have heard you style
Your violin strings till they cry,
Laugh, sing, fall, fly, whisper, die.

Michelle,
Sometimes I think you're too hard on Phillip.
He just smiles, doesn't give you back much lip.
But what I see is that, tough as you seem,

You're a natural coach, and those you love are your team.

Philip,

Two years have passed

Since I had you in my class.

Now you've been in real rugby mauls and worn the welts.

You are packin' even more heat in those tris and delts.

But as you win scrums and tear up the stadium sods,

Know that knowledge has more force than uranium

rods.

Ben,

You remind me of Bruce Wayne:

When things get crazy, you stay sane.

When our world seems like the Home of the Strange,

When solid ground seems too far out of range,

Dark clouds fall, and you hear the "Inception Braaam,"

Remember, real sanity comes from the Kingdom.

Jo,

You are the only high school student I have seen

Drop like a hundred dollars on a Bible commentary.

Treasure up that knowledge, but don't let it slow you down

As you press on toward the goal that in Christ you've found.

ハワード ビンセント

英語教師

彼らの素晴らしい歌声を次に聞くことができるのはいつかわからないので、今日この美しい歌を歌ってくれるように頼みました。それを思うと寂しいです。でもこの歌には、今夜、卒業生に伝えたいメッセージが込められています。今夜みなさんが一つだけ覚えておくとしたら、それは、次のことです。「キリストにあつて自分は決して忘れられていない。」神様はあなたの名前をご存知です。

実際、この歌には真理が実にうまく組み込まれています、しかもとてもシンプルに。私はもう何も言わずに、これで終わりと言って席に戻ってもいいくらいです。でも今晚、なぜこのメッセージが皆さんにとって大切なのか、またなぜ信じるままに生き続けることが難しいのか、お話しします。

神の御名が片隅に追いやられている世界に私たちは生きています。自分の名誉を求め、自分で自分を売り込んでいかなければいけない、と人は言います。そこには、人にレッテルを貼り、自分にもレッテルを貼って、時にとりつかれ、時に逃れようと懸命にもがく人生があります。でも、福音は、本当に必要な名前はたった一つだと教えています。キリストにある私たちの名前、それは、もがき求めることやめ、必死に逃れることをやめたときに受け取る名前です。

皆さんに今夜、3つの名前についてお話ししたいと思います。自分がもがき求める名前、必死に逃れようとする名前、そして全ての名に勝る名前、です。

卒業生の皆さん、宿題を出します。もちろんグループクラスルームにも載せます。この宿題は、読むこと、が必要です。やらなくてもバレない、と思うかもしれませんが、でも、私は誰かがきちんと読んだかがすぐにわかります。そし

て誰が読まなかったかもすぐにわかります。そして、「えへん」、誰がスパークノートの概要を読んだかもすぐにわかります。

自分が求める名前

まず、自分が求める名前です。これは肩書きや、名誉、勲章などを指します。今夜もこのような名前がたくさん出てきました。周りを見てください。記録を更新した選手、大会を勝ち抜いた選手、メダルを勝ち取った選手の名前が書いてあるバナーがたくさん飾ってあります。卒業生の皆さんも、この後、自分の名前が呼ばれ、前に出て、これからの学歴に必要である卒業証書を受け取ります。皆さんの中には今夜、最高の栄誉を受け取る卒業生も数人います。

今夜、私たちは皆さんの栄誉を称えています。けれど、このような栄誉の影に、実は恐れがある、と私は思います。今、皆さんはこう思っているかもしれません。「先生たちや後輩たちは、自分のことをどう覚えていているのだろうか。」「自分の名前が話題にのぼったら、みんな何と言うだろうか。」

卒業生の皆さん、有名になることを求めているように、いまいが、私たちは皆、同じ「恐れ」を持つてはいないでしょうか？その「恐れ」とは、自分が忘れられてしまうことです。この「恐れ」があるので、ある人は声を張りあげます。大げさに振る舞います。目立とうとします。どんなに物静かな人であっても、自分を覚えていて欲しい、と思うものです。

同じような恐れをいだき、同じように感じていた人たちが創世記に出てきます。バベルの塔のお話です。ではまず、第一の宿題です。と言っても、読む分量は一章もありませんけれど。バベルの塔とは、会社を立ち上げようとしている若くて優秀な人々の集まりです。世界初の事業発足のお話です。スタンフォード、ハーバード、カリフォルニア工科大学出身のエンジニア、建築士、企業戦略家や投資アドバイザーが揃っています。とてつもなく大きな構想を練っ

ています。「彼らはひとつの話しことばで話していた」と聖書にあることから、グローバルに物事を考えていたようです。

「さあ、われわれは町を建て、頂が天に届く塔を建てよう」と彼らは言いました。彼らを取り掛かった事業は、まず最初に世界一の高層ビルを建てることでした。なぜでしょうか。ここにこの話の鍵があります。「名をあげよう。」そしてその直後に、世界初の事業は、混乱し散らされてしまったのです。バベルの塔の話には、私たちへの教訓があります。自分の夢に気をつけなさい。自分がなそうとしていることに注意しなさい。自分が何を追い求めているか、注意を払いなさい、ということです。さらに、覚える、ということも教えています。神を覚えるのです。自分が神ではないことを覚えるのです。神様の御名を忘れ、自分の名をまず求めるなら、私たちは結局、呪いの下にある存在であることを思い知らされます。そしてこのことこそ、次に皆さんにお話したい名前です。

逃れようとする名前

自分が追い求める名前のことを今、話しました。次に、私たちが逃れようとしている名前を見てみましょう。

私が高校生の頃、自分につけられていた名前を教えましょう。それ以来、ずっと私にまわりついている名前です。「負け犬」「青二才」「気取り屋」「酔いどれ」「賞味切れ」「落ちこぼれ」などです。ずっと私を悩ませ続けている名前です。私が高校を卒業できたことに、高校の時の先生たちや校長先生はびっくりしたくらいです。なんとか大学に進学しましたが、そこでも同じ名前が私をつけまわっていました。大学院でも同じでした。たとえGPAがあと1ポイントで4.0に届くほどの成績であっても、頭の片すみで聞こえる声に悩まされていました。「お前は負け犬だ、お前の母親も、父親も、兄弟も。みんな同じだ。」何一つ成し遂げられていない。

卒業生の皆さん、たとえ卒業生総代に選ばれるほど優秀な人であっても、人は何かを周りに示さなければならぬ、と感じるものだと私は思います。たとえノーベル賞を受賞できるような科学者でもエンジニアでも、焼印のようにとりつかれた名前、あるいは自分で思い込んでしまっている名前から逃れられないことがあるのです。果たして私たちは、このような名前から逃れることが出来るのでしょうか。聖書の黙示録には、キリストにあるものは、古い名前に代わる新しい名前を授かっている、と書かれてあります。

全ての名前に勝る名前

自分が求める名前と、逃れようとしている名前のことをお話ししましたので、今度は全ての名前に勝る名前のことを話しましょう。

ここで皆さんに、もう一つの宿題を与えます。今までの宿題で一番短いものです。まずヘブル人への手紙の最初の4節を読んでください。ここには世界の歴史が一つの段落にまとめられています。全ては一人の人に帰結する、一つの名前に帰する、とされています。歪んだ世の中であって、もっとも偉大な名前、ただ一つ大事な名前、それは、イエス・キリストです。イエス様を通して神様は世界を造られました。もし、イエス様が今、私の隣に立たれていたら、イエス様は「神の栄光の輝き」を放たれていることでしょう。イエス様は、ご自分の栄光、誉れ、そして権力を捨てて、恥辱の名が塗られることを受け入れました。ここに鍵があります。企みが急展開します。ひとつのストーリー、歴史のストーリーがあります。

イエス様のお名前が偉大なのは、私たちには決してできないことを成し遂げてくださったからです。映画のロッキーのように、私たちは強くなりたい、名声を得たい、心の奥底にある劣等感から解放されたいと思っています。けれど、私たちは罪に囚われています。罪があ

るので、私たちはいつまでたっても無能なままなのです。でも、イエス・キリストが私たちの罪をきよめて、すぐれて高い所の大能者の右の座に着かれました。

私たちは、自分たちの名を上げるために、バベルで人々がしたように、天に届く塔を立てる必要はありません。天は、私たちのところにまで下ってきてくださいました。イエス・キリストは、自らを死に至らしめた人々の呪われた名前を、あえて自分に受けて、十字架にかけられました。こうしてサタンが自分を苦しめることを許されました。十字架の上では、想像もつかないような恐ろしい呪いが、渾身の力でイエスに襲いかかりました。イエスはそれにみ顔を向け、とげに刺されることで、死の力を無にしてくださったのです。この戦いによってイエス様の命は奪われました。けれども、それによって私たちに永遠のいのちが与えられました。そしてイエス様が、栄光のある御名をもって死からよみがえられたように、私たちもまたよみがえるのです。これがイエス様が私たちに与えてくださったものです。

よく聞いて下さい。この名前は、人が何かをして得るものではありません。自分のエゴのために、伴侶や自分の子どもを犠牲にしてしまうようなアメリカの文化では、受け入れがたい名前です。過労死してしまうほど働かされるのが起こり得る東京では、受け入れがたい名前です。学歴偏重で生徒が押しつぶされそうになっている韓国では、受け入れがたい名前です。人は、どれほど努力しても自分の力ではイエス様に届きません。必要なのは、自分がイエス様を必要としていることを認めることです。イエス様の御名の力に頼って生きはじめるとき、私たちは初めて自分で自分を証明しようとするをやめ、自分から逃れることをやめるのです。

卒業生のみなさん、クラスメートや先生方が皆さんのことをどのように覚えているかは、

私にはわかりません。でも、これから私が皆さんのことをどのように覚えているか、伝えましょう。皆さんにある詩をお聞かせします。皆さん、ひとりひとりの名前が入っている詩です。キリストにあってあなたの名前が決して忘れられることがないことを、この詩を通してみなさんが覚えて入られたら幸いです。

* 詩は、あまりにも個人的で本人たち（だけ）に伝わる内容なので、省略しています。悪しからず。

2018 Senior Address

by Lena Billy-Eko

Good evening Ladies, Gentlemen, parents, faculty, and class of 2018. My name is Lena Billy-Eko and I am standing here today as proof that this class has come a long way. Before I address my class, I would like to thank all the people who sacrificed their time to be here today. I would like to thank the people who took last minute flights to get here, and the people watching live. Whether we admit it or not, it is thanks to the support of our families, and of our staff and teachers here that We have managed to make it to this day.

I would also like to thank my class who voted me here. As you know by now, I am not the valedictorian so I assume I'm standing here because you guys believe that some sort of truth can come out of what I say today and I hope I don't disappoint you.

You know, All of my life, the only thing I have ever really wanted was to go to sleep without having to worry about what was going to happen tomorrow. However, due to the nature of my life, there was always something to worry about. It seemed like once one obstacle was dealt with, all I needed to do was turn around to find another one waiting. And so my mind was always programmed to think, and expect the worst.

I thought that if life wasn't creating opportunities for me to be happy, then maybe I didn't deserve it. And That didn't change when I came to CAJ. In fact, some of you remember that I spent most of freshman year convincing myself that I was alone, that I didn't deserve kindness, and that I was too damaged and too different to be accepted. I blamed my negativity on everything and everyone except the actual problem. Me and My way of thinking.

I believe that a lot of us are similar. We experience things that make us feel like we can't accomplish anything, and unconsciously we tell ourselves that we deserve all the bad things that happen to us, that we're not worth it but the problem is, we say it so many times that we actually start to believe it and we find ourselves waiting for bad things to happen. The truth is, You only have to say something so many times before it starts to have an effect on you. So, you tell yourself that you're not good enough, and all you're gonna see are your flaws. Tell yourself that you're not destined for great things, and you'll find yourself never able to think bigger than average. Because you've spoken so much negativity and failure into your own life. And it's slowing you down.

Class of 2018, we're about to go into a world that is already waiting to make us feel undeserving. It's waiting to make us question everything about ourselves, and it's waiting to pick out our flaws one by one and throw them at our faces. But As difficult as things are going to get once we leave here, we can't allow all the negativity to distract us from our purpose.

Thanks to Mrs. Johnson, we've spent most of senior year asking ourselves, who we are, Why we're here, and what our purpose is. Well, If you were to ask me, I would tell you that purpose is what wakes us up every morning. What motivates us, It's What we're most passionate about, Where we want to see ourselves years from now. It's what we're aiming for. And these are things nobody can decide for us. Our parents can try, they can force us to go to a specific college, or tell us what kind of person they expect us to be. But ultimately, Your purpose, is your purpose. It's what God created us for. So we can go around in circles, take a completely different path, we can even try to talk ourselves out of it, but we will eventually end up where we were always meant to be.

The world outside CAJ is not going to be completely horrible. It will be a little different at first, maybe difficult. we might feel out of place, maybe a little lost but, We had to go through SWOW, Thailand, Talent Show, Senior comps interviews, papers, projects, presentations. Everyone of us seated here has made it through all the sadness, the difficulty, and the fear we experience on a daily basis. That is proof enough that we are capable of so much. Not to mention that we're not alone. We were never alone.

If you look at the person next to you, you will realize that they are just as anxious or scared of the future. A lot of us are. We're constantly asking ourselves: If we have what it takes to survive in such a broken world. What can **we**, really contribute to **the world**. What if we never make it, or we never accomplish our goals. **Class of 2018, LET US STOP TRYING TO BE OUR BEST VERSIONS OF SOMEONE ELSE.** The world has taught us that there are steps that leads to success. Steps that we need to follow in chronological order. It has taught us that in order to be valid, we need to be the first ones to cross the finish line **BUT THAT, IS A LIE**

It's meant to push us into giving up before we even start.

We're all running a different race here. And believe me when I say it is not about being one step further than anybody else. Once we reach our desired destination, we'll find out that none of that ever mattered.

It doesn't matter how many times we stop along the way as long as we make it to our finish line. As long as every step of the way, we can look at ourselves and be proud that today, we are better than we were yesterday and tomorrow we will be better than we are today. It's okay if a year or 4 years from now, you're not where you thought you would be. Be patient with yourselves.

I want us to Forget about all the things people ever told us that we have to be
Forget about all the things we have been programmed to believe
Today, we all get a fresh start and our only 2 goals in life, should be to Firstly, do right by God, the one who does not require our belief to be who he is. The one who has brought us this far and the one we often forget or refuse to acknowledge.

and secondly, make sure that we can be proud of everything we do.

Guys, the difference now, is that we have a little more control meaning we can decide what directions our lives go from here but, in order to achieve our full potential, we need to Believe in our abilities. Believe that we deserve success, that we deserve peace, and happiness.
Because We can no longer be our own enemy.
The world is broken yes and we may be broken people but Remember that It's a choice to remain broken.

I said this to you in Thailand, and I'm going to say it again. Class of 2018, Guys, Do not ever allow your lives to be about all the things that went wrong. Don't allow even your own disbelief to slow down your progress. If along the way you do happen to fall, take a moment, learn from it, cry if you have to but then get back up and keep going. If life doesn't stop when we fail, then neither should we.
It's been a fun 3 years with you guys, Thank you for believing in me, thank you for supporting me and thank you for your friendship. Congratulations and Good luck out there!

ビリー・エコー リーナ
卒業生

ご来賓の方々、保護者の方々、先生方、2018年度のクラスメートの皆さん、こんばんは。私の名前はレナ・ビリーエコーです。私が今日ここに立っていること自体、このクラスがどれほど成長したかの良い証です。皆さんの前でお話をする前に、今日、お忙しい中、ご自分の時間を割いてここに集まって下さった方々にお礼を言いたいと思います。ギリギリ間に合わせるために飛行機で来て下さった方々、またビデオストリームでご覧になって下さっている方々に感謝します。私たちがそう思っているか、思っていないか、私たちが今日ここまでたどり着けたのは、私たちを支えてくれた家族や学校の教職員の方々のおかげであることは間違いありません。

また、私を推薦してくれたクラスメートにも感謝します。私は卒業生総代ではないので、皆さんは本当のことを聞きたいのだと思います。そして私がお話しできることも本当の事しかありません。

私のこれまでの人生で、私が本当に手に入れたかったものとは、明日何が起こるのかを心配せずに眠りにつく、ということです。欲しかったものはそれだけです。けれど、私は心配性なので、いつも心配事があります。ひとつの障害物を取り除くと、またすぐ次の障害物があらわれます。なので、私の頭はいつも何か考えていて、常に最悪の事態を思ってしまうのです。

私は、こう思いました。この世の中が私を幸せにする機会を与えてくれないなら、私には幸せになる価値がないのかもしれない。CAJに来た時も同じ考えでした。9年生の時、私はいつも自分は一人であるべきで、人に優しくしてもらう価値はない、自分はあまりにも他の人と違いすぎるし、受け入れてはもらえない、自分はだめな人間だ、と思い込んでい

ました。現実の問題そのもの以外の、全てが悪い、みんなのせいだ、そんな風に思っていた私を覚えている人がいるでしょう。

私たちはみんな似ているところがあると思います。自分は何もできない、と思い込んでしまうような経験をみんなします。そして無意識のうちに、自分のせいでこんなに悪いことが降りかかっているんだ、だから自分には価値がないんだと思い込むようになります。そこでの問題は、そう口にしてしまうことです。その結果、自分でもそう信じ込んでしまい、悪いことが次に起こっても、当たり前と思うようになってしまうのです。同じことを繰り返す言い聞かせていると、それが本当でなくてもそれを信じ込むようになってしまうことが問題です。ですから、自分はハンサムじゃない、美人じゃないと自分に言い聞かせていれば、目に入るのは、自然と自分の悪いところばかりになります。自分は大きなことは何も成し遂げられないと思いつけていたら、平均的なことしかできなくなってしまうでしょう。それはあなたが自分で自分に否定的なことばかりを言い聞かせてきたからです。

卒業生の皆さん、私たちがこれから飛び込んでいく世界はすでに私たちを価値のないものしようとする世界です。自分に疑いを抱かせる世の中、私たちの悪いところばかりを取り上げて、顔に塗りつけようとしている世界です。この学校を去った後、どれだけ困難があろうとも、この世が誘い出す否定的な面ばかりに気を取られて、自分が遂げようとしている目的を忘れてはいけません。

この一年間、私たちはいつも問いかけてきました。「自分たちは何者か」、「なぜここにいるのか」、「自分たちの目的は何か」と。その問いかけに私が答えるとしたら、私は、あなたの目的は、あなたが毎朝起きる理由の中にある、と言うでしょう。目覚まし時計の音ではなく、あなたが今日成し遂げようと思っていることです。あなたが目標としていること

は何か、あなたを突き動かしているものは何か、あなたが信じていることは何か？これは自分自身で決めなければいけないことです。親は、あなたに代わって決めようとするかもしれません。親が希望する大学に行かせようとしたり、親の期待通りの人になってくれ、と言ってくるかもしれません。でも、最終的には、自分の目的は自分のものです。神様があなたを創られた目的があるはずで、回り道をしたり、違う道を辿ったにしても、結局、私たちが行き着くべきところは、私たちが創られた目的に帰結します。

私は、CAJの外の世界がすべて悪であると言っています。外の世界はこことは違って、初めのうちは困難があるかもしれません。場違いに感じたり、迷ったりするかもしれません。でも、私たちより先に巣立った先輩たちも同じ道を通ったのですから、私たちにもできないはずがありません。ここに座っている私たちひとりひとは、今日のこの日を迎えるまでに様々な状況に出会いました。悲しかったこと、難しかったこと、怖かったこと、様々な経験を経て、今ここにいます。それらの経験から、私たちにもできる、と言えます。一人ではないと言い切れます。ひとりぼっちではありませんでした。

隣の人を見てください。みんな自分と同じように将来のことに不安を抱いています。みんな不安なのです。この歪んだ世界で生き延びる力が自分にあるのか、といつも問いかけています。この世に貢献できるような力が自分に本当にあるのかと。もし失敗して、初めからやり直さなければいけなくなったらどうしようかと。卒業生の皆さん、自分以外の人になろうと努力することはもうやめましょう。皆さんは、今、私の頭がおかしくなったかのような顔をして私を見ていますが、もう一度言います。自分以外の人になろうとすることをやめましょう。この世は、私たちに、成功に行き着くには一つ一つの段階を踏んでいかなければいけない、と教えます。年代を順番

に追っていかなければならない、と言います。確実な成功を手にするには、まず何においても一番にならなければいけないと、この世は私たちに教えています。でも、それは嘘です。

それは、私たちがまだ始める前から、諦めさせてしまおうとする罠です。

私たちが走っているレースはみんなそれぞれ違います。他の人よりも一歩先を走るということではないのです。ゴールに到着して振り返ると、そのようなことは全く大切でなかったことがわかるでしょう。ゴールに到着するまでに、何度立ち止まってもいいんです。大切なのはゴールすることです。ゴールに到るまでの間、その日その日に自分を見つめ、自分に誇りが持てるなら、それで良いではないですか。今日の自分が昨日の自分よりも良いと思えるなら、それでいいではないですか。明日の自分が今日の自分より進んでいるなら、それでいいと思います。1年先でも、4年先でも、自分が想像していたところと違う場所に自分がいなくても、大丈夫です。焦らないでください。

こうでなければならぬ、と人が私たちに言い続けて来たことがあるなら、それらは全て忘れましょう。こう考えなければいけない、とプログラムされてきたことがあるなら、それらは全て忘れましょう。今日、私たちは新しく再出発するのです。その私たちが目指すべきゴールはふたつです。一つは、神様の前で正しく生きること。私たちが信じることを必要とはされていない、唯一不変の神様。私たちをここまで導いて下さった神様。そして私たちがしばしば忘れ、拒んでしまうことさえある神様。その神様の前で正しく生きましょう。そして二つ目は、私たちのすること全てに誇りを持つことです。

皆さん、自分たちにはコントロールできる程度の差があつて、ここから進む道は自分で決めることができるでしょう。でも、自分の可能性をフルに発揮するために、自分の力を信じましょう。自分には成功する価値がある、

平安に、幸せになる価値があることを信じましょう。自分で自分の敵になる必要はありません。この世は壊れているし、私たちも壊れた存在です。でも、壊れたままの状態にいるか、いないかは私たちの選択だということを覚えてください。

タイでも言いましたが、同じことをもう一度みなさんに言います。卒業生の皆さん、今まで失敗してきたことによって、これからの人生を左右されることはやめてください。不信感があるからといって前進するスピードを下げないでください。たとえ途中で倒れることがあっても、そのときは時間をとって立ち止まってください。そこから何かを学び、必要なら涙を流し、また立ち上がり、進み続けてください。この3年間とても楽しかったです。みなさんとの友情、みなさんからの支え、そして様々なドラマもみんなありがとう。卒業おめでとう！そしてこれからの幸運を祈ります！