

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE



Valedictory Address Set Your Heart on the Lord

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Now I know that many of you may be thinking about what you are going to eat for lunch, and some of you students may be preoccupied by that potential Conjugal Soul Mate sitting a few rows away, I would kindly beg of you just a moment of your time and attention.

While I would love to tell you that my Theological School experience was carefree and easy, I cannot. Theological School, as good for me as it may have been, was a challenge.

There were, of course, moments of great satisfaction. Lazy Friday evenings eating West African food with my dorm buddies Guillaume, Atta, Ryan, not to mention discussing deep doctrinal matters such as the existence of the “limbus” in class. Or again going out to Starbucks with Brian and failing miserably to accomplish any homework. These times I will never forget.

I will also never forget Alex Zikic’s Serbian folk tales and the time spent pondering their deep spiritual significance. And how could I forget those few memorable moments in Dean Dibb’s office where we worked together to help develop my character. OK, maybe there were more than a few of these moments in his office, but I’m grateful for the progress we made.

One of my favorite memories of all will be the early morning worships in the summer that Malcolm, Guillaume, Brian and I would do before diving into our dissertational studies.

Yes, Theological School had its carefree and easy moments, but what some might not know is that this wonderful experience came with its fair share of spiritual trial, the trial that accompanies an undertaking such as joining the ministry. While Theological School may paint itself as both a test of mental and social endurance, the true journey into the ministry is something somewhat less apparent. This journey has been about one thing above the rest – learning to love other people.

Maybe I was naive to think that I could devote my life to such a deep and noble study, and not be challenged in receiving a love to match these truths.

What do you do with a set of teachings which paint a picture of such a beautiful and heavenly life when we may look into our own hearts and see such an imperfect and broken vessel?

What do we do when we read of such beautiful ideals, and our friend is struggling to take that first important step toward spirituality?

And what can we say when we are told the Lord’s presence is universal and in the least details of Providence, but someone is struggling just to believe that God is real?

I don't know how to answer all these questions. But what I have come to see is that these struggles cannot be remedied by all the truth, in all the books of the Word and the Heavenly Doctrine alone, but can only be answered by a deep love, a love modeled by a God merciful enough to work with imperfect people, and to love imperfect people.

When I entered the Theological School I'm not sure I was ready to set my heart on what the Lord had in store for me. In fact I left Theological School after my first year to see if there was something else out there for me. If I am honest I can tell you that I was scared. As the true nature of the ministry revealed itself to me, I began to see how much of my dreams, my time and my interest I was going to have to set aside for a greater good and that scared me.

But somehow, some way, I am here, thanks to the Lord. Thank goodness there are others willing to accept a more subtle leading from the Lord than I.

My fellow Theologians as we travel our separate ways to far off lands such as South Africa, Benin West Africa, Boulder, Toronto-Canada and to the other side of the Penny pack, know that in love our journey is united.

My hometown of Bryn Athyn – there are so many wonderful things about this town that can get overlooked if we let the small stuff blind our vision. Let us set our hearts on the Lord and move forward.

Theological School, I am truly grateful for the Lord's work that you continue to do and the beautiful doctrine that you continue to teach. May you ever set your heart on the mission to spread the good news of the Lord's Second Coming.

What I have learned from my time at Theological School is that if you set your heart on the Lord, you cannot fail. And so if you have not already, I invite you to set your heart on the Lord.

In writing this valedictory speech I turned to the Psalms for inspiration and I would like to share a little bit of what I read. Class of 2010 I invite you to remember these words as we carry the message of the Lord's Second Coming into the nations.

From Psalm 108:

*O God, my heart is steadfast...
I will sing and make music with all my soul.
I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations;
I will sing of you among the peoples.
For great is your love, higher than the heavens;
your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,
and let your glory be over all the earth.
Save us and help us with your right hand,
that those you love may be delivered...
O God, my heart is steadfast.*

Thank you.