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**High School Chapel**

*Can be used as a farewell to graduating seniors*

**Invocation:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Opening Hymn (CW 329)**

1. Lord, dismiss us with your blessing;

Fill our hearts with joy and peace.

Let us each your love possessing,

Triumph in redeeming grace.

Oh, refresh us, oh, refresh us,

Trav’ling through this wilderness

1. Thanks we give and adoration

For the gospel’s joyful sound;

May the fruits of your salvation

In our hearts and lives abound!

Ever faithful, ever faithful

To your truth may we be found.

1. So whene’er the signal’s given

Us from earth to call away,

Borne on angels’ wings to heaven,

Glad the summons to obey,

May we ever, may we ever

Reign with Christ in endless day.

**Devotion - Acts 20:24**

*However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.*

Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, our Lord,

There’s a young man on a car ride with his parents. He’s approaching the legal age of adulthood and his birthday is right around the corner. With a jolt of confidence he says to his parents, “Guess what I am going to do when I turn 18? I’m going to go to a casino and gamble.” He’s over the fear that his parents may strongly disapprove and voice not only their concern but forbiddance. He’s convinced himself that being 18 means he’s an adult who doesn’t have to listen to them all of the time. He’s convinced that age 18 means he’s on his own. His parents remain calm (even though this gives their hearts reasons to flutter with concern) and simply say, “Ok. If that is your goal at age 18, just make sure you are careful.” As his parents had time to drive home with their son, his mother had a plan. Part of that plan took place the next weekend. On her son’s 18th birthday, she had breakfast ready for him and in the background there was a song playing. Dad came from the den and sat down with them and said, “Ah, you’ve put an oldie but a goodie on. It’s Kenny Rogers and his famous song, ‘The Gambler’.” His son gives him the eyeroll. But it doesn’t sway his dad from quoting the lyrics as the song was somehow on repeat that morning. “It’s the train bound for nowhere,” he says. As the refrain starts he joins in singing, “You gotta know when to hold ‘em, know when to fold ‘em, know when to walk away, and know when to run.” Out comes the young adult sigh. “I know what you’re doing. You’re telling me you’re not happy about my decision to go gambling.” His mother sat down with them and said, “No, we’re not telling you not to go but we are using this as a moment to share our concerns. Our conversation from the other night goes a bit deeper. Your father and I know that you are 18 and with that age comes more responsibilities, freedoms, and choices that will present themselves to you.” His dad chimes in and says, “Not only do we want you to be careful with that decision you expressed to us of what you are going to do today but with other matters where your mother and I are not there to make decisions for you. And so we figured we could use this song to teach you something. In that song, the man’s life is in shambles. And while the stranger talks poker with him, it has a connection to life. For you, your mother and I have raised you in a Christian home. Inside of this home sin happens, because it’s what we are, we’re sinners. What holds us together is our gracious Lord. Instead of a hand of cards, think of your Savior. It’s important for you to know when to hold onto him. It’s important for you that you regularly fold them (hands). It’s important for you to know when to walk away from situations that will cause you to fall far away from your Savior. And it’s important for you to know when it’s time to run. When we say run, we mean both what to run from and where to run to.” This was an important lesson for a young man as he transitioned into adulthood.

Here we are at the end of a school year. For many of you this is an exciting time. It’s summer break. For some, it’s where your time on this campus is done. Now it’s onto the next stage of your life. The words chosen for today talk about running. They’re words spoken by the apostle Paul as they are recorded in Acts. **However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.** Kenny Rogers sang of the train bound for nowhere. The apostle Paul speaks of what his life would be if he was disconnected from his Savior. It would be worth nothing. It would be empty and destined for destruction in hell. What had meaning was his relationship with his Savior and the work his Savior had entrusted to him. Part of that work was to finish his earthly life following his Savior. The other part was the work of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace. As Paul competed in that race of life, there were times when he had to be held by his Savior. There were times where he needed to fold his hands in prayer to his Savior. There were times when he knew it was time to walk away from temptation and times to run. Both run away (from sin) and run to his Savior.

With all of you, you have your moments of boldness. You have your moments of where you don’t always appreciate the instruction given to you by your Savior through your parents and teachers. You’ve noticed that as you age, there is more freedom paired with responsibility and at times your choices can be categorized on the train to nowhere. Summer often produces different temptations. For you seniors, there’s more than just summer. You have the next transition in life. For many of you it’s college. For others it’s the military. For others, it’s adulthood and the workforce. Regardless of which one of those it is, it’s important to remember to finish the race set before you. It’s a race that is not bound for nowhere. It’s heavenward bound. The devil is going to tempt you along the way. Your faith is going to be challenged. You’re going to make some decisions that are far less wise than the young man bound and determined to see what the bright lights, smoked filled, places full of rings and dings had to offer him. With these transitions and the years connected to them, remember the analogy you’ve heard today. You gotta know when to hold him (Jesus). You gotta know when to fold them (prayer to your Savior). You gotta know when to walk away (from temptation) and walk toward (his Word) and know when to run (both away from sin and toward your Savior). For those of you close to graduation, as you consider and think about these things, this is also where our campus ministries, our military chaplaincies, and wherever you end calling home for the next few years come in. Those ministries want to serve you. Make sure you get connected to them.

As we complete another year, we give thanks for the blessings he’s given us through this place where we have been able to hear his Word. For three fourths of you, we have a bit of a break before we see you again. Stay connected to your Savior this summer. For the other fourth of you, it’s been a joy to be able to point you to your Savior with your time here and we wish you the Lord’s blessings as you continue to run the race marked out for you. Amen.

**Prayer:**

Lord God, heavenly Father, you see us growing up in an uncertain and confusing world. Send your Holy Spirit into our hearts that we may continue to grow in grace and wisdom. Give us the strength to resist temptation and courage to meet the challenges of each new day. Show us that following you is more satisfying than pursuing selfish goals. Make our unique gifts and youthful vitality a blessing to our families, the Church, and to all others in our lives that we encounter. Be with our seniors as they transition from this school to the next stage of their lives. Thank you for allowing them to be a blessing to us here. Guard them both physically and spiritually all the days of their lives. Help them walk in your ways until you finally call them home to heaven. Whether they continue with institutional education, enroll in the military, or enter the workforce help them to remain faithful to you and keep your Word as their constant companion. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**Closing Hymn (CW 332)**

**Faculty/Staff & Freshmen, Sophomores, and Juniors**

1. Go, my children with my blessing, Never alone.

Waking, sleeping, I am with you; You are my own.

In my love’s baptismal river I have made you mine forever

Go, my children with my blessing – You are my own.

**All**

1. Go, my children, sins forgiven, At peace and pure.

Here you learned how much I love you, What I can cure.

Here you heard my dear Son’s story; Here you touch him, saw his glory.

Go, my children, sins forgiven, At peace and pure.

**Freshmen, Sophomores, & Juniors**

1. Go, my children fed and nourished, Closer to you me;

Grow in love and love by serving, Joyful and free.

Here my Spirit’s power filled you, Here his tender comfort still you.

Go, my children, fed and nourished, Joyful and free.

**Faculty/Staff (and any parents)**

1. I the Lord will bless and keep you and give you peace;

I the Lord will smile upon you and give you peace;

I the Lord will be your Father, Savior, Comforter, and Brother.

Go, my children, I will keep you and give you peace.

(CW 332)