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**2023 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 (CW93 449; CW21 502)**

1. Children of the heav’nly Father
Safely in His bosom gather;
Nestling bird nor star in heaven
Such a refuge e’er was given.
2. God His own doth tend and nourish;
In His holy courts they flourish;
From all evil things He spares them;
In His mighty arms He bears them.
3. Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord His children sever;
Unto them His grace He showeth,
And their sorrows all He knoweth.
4. Though He giveth or He taketh,
God His children ne’er forsaketh;
His the loving purpose solely
To preserve them pure and holy.

**Devotion – Numbers 6:22-27**

**Nu 6:22 The LORD said to Moses, Nu 6:23 “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:**

**Nu 6:24 “ ‘ “The LORD bless you and keep you;**

**Nu 6:25 the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;**

**Nu 6:26 the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. ” ’**

**Nu 6:27 “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”**

Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, our Lord,

Stuff We All Get! We call it “swag”. [[1]](#footnote-1) Maybe you’re wearing some today or you have a pen with our school’s name on it. We use swag as we promote and recruit for our high school here. Swag has proven to be a key piece in building business relationships. It can be used as a bridge for introductions. It can be used as a thank you piece for those who furthered the relationship. Swag is used to build morale at school or in a workplace. It can be a walking advertisement. “Swag” – Stuff We All Get!

As we close our school year, today is one of the last times we will gather here with this group of individuals. For the seniors, you have some familiarity with swag. The military recruiter gave you something when you stopped at their office or when they came here. When various colleges came here to visit, you got some swag from various tables. When you were accepted and committed to a place of higher learning and/or toured a campus, you can remember the swag they gave you. If staying put and working is part of your plan, you probably have some company/work apparel.

With our reading from Scripture, there’s something we all get that’s better than any pen, t-shirt, pair of sunglasses, or top of the line wind breaker. It’s a blessing that all of you have heard multiple times. You’ve heard it at the end of chapel devotions like this. You’ve heard it at the close of sacred concerts, services at your home church and other churches you’ve visited. You probably have even sung a rendition of it with the school choir. Maybe you even remember as a little kid, or hearing one of your siblings, or one of the little ones in the back of church say, “is it time to go home?” It’s a blessing we get. It’s known as the Aaronic blessing, and it’s often spoken at the end of worship. It’s not the name of a college or branch of military. It’s the name of our gracious and glorious Lord God that he has attached to you. You are a part of his family and you’ve heard it over and over again just as God’s people in the Old Testament did.

Why do we need this? It has to do with our “swagger”. It’s the arrogant prideful walk we so often put on display before our Lord God and others. It’s the self-centered stroll that belittles others. It happens all the time in thought. Then it goes on display with the words we speak to or about others. It happens with actions we take. The sinful swagger might be found in the pride “see how I’m going to…and I am going to be a…” The swagger may be seen as you leave this place, abandoning the Lord’s instruction, enticed and convinced that the world has a far better offer for you. The sinful swagger is the jealousy and envy that finds safe harbor in our hearts - with fellow servants of our Savior, whether on staff, between staff and students, and/or between students. What do we deserve because of that swagger? We don’t deserve the Lord’s blessings. We deserve to be cast out of his presence forevermore in hell. We deserve his back to us. We deserve to be in a constant state of fear and separated from our God because of our sinful swagger.

But that is not what he gives us. It is not what he wants us to leave with. Instead, what do we hear? **“The LORD bless you and keep you.** This is something we all get! Instead of cursing, he blesses. Instead of casting us aside, he keeps us. He connects us to him. He provides and preserves us. This is something we all get! **The LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.** Instead of punishing us for what we deserve, he’s gracious to us. His face shined upon us as he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior. Jesus was our perfect substitute whose walk was not a sinful swagger but in step with the will of his heavenly Father. His steps took him to a cross where he died for all of our sinful swagger, our pride, our arrogance – all of our sins. His steps were on full display as he conquered the grave on Easter morning. While our pathways will result in death (unless Jesus returns before we’re called home to heaven), when death comes, we know we’ll be with our Lord God, the one who has put his name on us. Something we all get! **The LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.** We are God’s dearly loved children. Through the Means of Grace, we have comfort in knowing how God has called us to be his own, enlightened us with his gifts, he’s sanctified us, and kept us in the true faith. Something we all get!

That is where our hope and prayer is as we go into summer, that you remember this “stuff we all get” as found in this wonderful blessing. For those of you returning, we look forward to seeing you next fall. For those of you leaving and going to your next stage of life, you get to go with this blessing. It’s our hope and prayer that your walk remains a faithful walk with your Savior. There are lots of new and exciting things about where you are going. There are also temptations. Remember how the devil wants to disconnect you from your Lord God. He does that through enticing and then causing despair. Remember this blessing that dismisses you, strengthens you, and tells you whose name has been attached to you. You belong to the Lord. Remember to regularly go where you’ll hear this blessing at the end of Bible studies and worship services.

There’s one other aspect to this stuff we all get – swag - from the Lord. Students wear the apparel of their college/university. Those in the military have their uniforms. Where we work, we often have something that displays the company name. As children of God, you’re going to encounter people who don’t know who Jesus is. As he sends you out with his blessing, part of that blessing is the comfort of knowing who our Lord is and what he’s done to save mankind. He wants us to point others to him. As a college or navy recruiter gives out swag, we do too. That stuff we give out is gospel proclamation. It’s pointing to Jesus in the various vocations we have. People need to hear the gospel at colleges and universities. They need to hear it in the military. And they need to hear that proclamation where we work and live. As we close this year, go with God’s blessing! 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 (CW93 332; CW21 930)**

**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 me;

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

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

1. Presenter may even have some of your school’s swag on hand or in a picture if it’s a PowerPoint presentation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)