Graduation Meditation – June 1, 2017

 **Psalm 17:6-9 The Graduates have chosen verses 8 and 9 as their Class Verse.**

**CONFIDENCE FOR THE FUTURE**

Education is about the future – preparing students with the skills and knowledge they will need for a successful life as adults. Our school is something more – preparing for the future by giving our students a spiritual and moral foundation for a truly happy, contented life – in this world and in the eternity to follow.

Education is about the future – therefore, none of us at the present time are going to be able to see or fully appreciate what was accomplished in this school in the past 9 months. But we are confident that in the lives of our students God will bless the efforts that were made here for years to come and in ways we can’t even begin to imagine now. With that confidence we also thank our teachers and all who worked faithfully in the schoolyear to educate our children.

The verse chosen by the 8th grade class as their graduation verse speaks of CONFIDENCE FOR THE FUTURE. That is especially true if you read the verse in its context:

**6** I call on you, my God, for you will answer me….
**7**Show me the wonders of your great love,
    you who save by your right hand those who take refuge in you from their foes.

**8Keep me as the apple of your eye;
    hide me in the shadow of your wings
9from the wicked who are out to destroy me,
    from my mortal enemies who surround me.**

In choosing this verse our graduates showed that they are **REALISTIC ABOUT WHAT LIES AHEAD.** Their verse speaks of *the wicked who are out to destroy me,… mortal enemies who surround me.* The verse seems a bit depressing for 8th graders to choose, but it is realistic.

King David who wrote this psalm 3,000 years ago certainly knew about wicked men who were out to destroy him and mortal enemies who surrounded him. In school our students learned about some of those events in David’s life. They learned how David faced the giant Goliath – a mortal enemy bent on killing David. Then David had to run and hide for years from wicked King Saul’s repeated attempts to kill him. Later as king, David endured numerous attempts to dethrone him – including at least two rebellions led by his own wicked sons. Yes, David knew what he was talking about when he spoke of wicked men and mortal enemies.

I’m not so sure what wicked men and mortal enemies our graduates had in mind as they chose their graduation verse, but perhaps they were showing that they’ve learned their Bible well. They will be faced with the Allied Army of Evil – the three great spiritual enemies which the Scripture speaks about – the devil, the world and our old sinful self.

Think it through! The Bible warns that the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. As we look to the future, we know that Satan will continue to be there, trying to lead us away from our loving God. He has a big helper in the world around us. Our graduates will go on to high school and then to college where they will meet teachers who don’t share the values we do and where they will hang around with classmates and friends who openly mock our belief in Jesus and the Bible. None of us has to look far to find the third enemy – for the Old Sinful Self continues to live in each of us. Whenever a decision needs to be made in moral or religious matters, there is a voice saying: “Choose the easy path – the sinful path.”

But the intention of this meditation is to speak about **CONFIDENCE FOR THE FUTURE.** The graduates are right. As their verse says, they can be **CONFIDENT ABOUT WHAT LIES AHEAD**.

*I call on you, my God, for you will answer me*…., David writes;***Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings.*** David is using the literary devise called metaphor. Alan says he wants to go to college to take English and writing. Perhaps I should let him explain what a metaphor is. But I’ll do it myself. Metaphor is *a figure of speech which makes a comparison between two things that are unrelated but share some common characteristics*.

***Keep me as the apple of your eye.*** The original, literal translation of the Hebrew words used here is: *keep me as the little man of your eye.* It refers to the pupil of your eye – the eye’s delicate center opening which is essential for seeing. It must be protected at all costs, and we instinctively do so as we quickly cover our eyes when there’s a bright light or flying objects. Keep me, Lord, protect me as one who is precious, delicate and can easily be hurt.

***Hide me in the shadow of your wings.*** There’s a double metaphor here: First, hide me in the shadow – Remember that David lived in a hot, desert climate. Long exposure to the blazing sun is dangerous and can lead to death. In such an environment a person needs and really appreciates shade. Shade protects from the oppressive heat of the hot desert sun’s rays. Shade me, Lord -- shelter me from those people and things which would harm me.

Hide me ***under your wings.*** That’s one more metaphor. It’s the picture of a hen protecting her chicks under her wings in time of danger. Under her wings the young chicks find protection, warmth, comfort, and closeness. We have a God who cares so much about us that he keeps us under the protective cover of his wings. Like God saved the young David when he had to face lions and bears in order to protect his sheep, we can be assured that he will show us the wonders of his great love when we face our foes. Like David was protected by God when fleeing from wicked King Saul, we can go sliding under God’s wings and find safety there. Like God thwarted all the plans to drive David from his throne, we can be certain he will keep our enemies from succeeding in their efforts to lead us astray.

There was a special reason that God protected David and kept his family line on the throne. God had promised to show his great love by sending a Redeemer from David’s line one who would save sinners. A redeemer in the Old Testament was a family-member who would step in to pay a relative’s debt or ransom a kinsman who had fallen captive to an invading army. The Redeemer to come from David’s line would pay the debt of our sins and ransom us from the eternal punishment we deserve because of our failure to live the perfect lives God’s law demands. The Redeemer was Jesus Christ, who regularly identified himself as the Son of David. Jesus is God, the second person in the three-in-one God of the Bible. Jesus’ perfect righteousness credited to our account, his payment for our sins on the cross, his love for sinners, his promises of forgiveness; they all are offered to us as a free gift through faith. *The wonders of God’s great love* was shown to most of our students already when they were babies when they were baptized, and the Holy Spirit put faith in their hearts.

In the Old Testament God says: *I the Lord do not change* (Mal 3:6). He promised a Savior from David’s line, and he kept his word. The New Testament repeats the thought: God *does not change like shifting shadows*. Since our God does not change, it’s easy to understand why we can face the future with a sense of confidence. For thousands of years – to men like David and thousands of others – God has shown his faithfulness. We can confidently join David in praying: *Show me the wonders of your great love, you who save by your right hand those who take refuge in you from their foes.* This is the truth our school has taught you students. You can trust the Lord Jesus, going to him in prayer confident he will hear and answer in a way that is truly for your good. It is our prayer that this truth – this confidence – will stick with you all the future days of your life.

A word to you parents: you sent your children here all year – that’s good. I am certain that in the future you will see that God blessed any expense or extra effort it cost you. But one thing is even more important than sending them to a Christian school. That more important thing is bringing them to a Christian church. I plead with you to bring your children to God’s house each week to spend time with Jesus. You are always welcome here as we gather for Sunday morning worship each week at 9:00 A.M.

You have shown that you understand the importance of Christian education. There’s something more effective, more lasting than the Christian education your children have received in our school. It’s the Christian education they receive all their formative years through your example in their homes. You are the model they are most likely to copy. You are teaching them a valuable, lifelong lesson each time you are in church worshiping God. And you are teaching them each time they witness your confident trust that God is ***keeping you as the apple of his eye and hiding you in the shadow of his wings.***  Amen,