**15245, David Kennedy**

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to welcome all of our graduates, their families and their friends to today’s graduation ceremony. Graduation is an event, but education is a journey. Today you have come to one event in your journey to educating your selves. T.S. Eliot said, “Knowledge is invariably a matter of degree: you cannot put your finger upon even the simplest datum and say this we know.” You will continue to learn every day of your lives. It is up to you what you do with what you learn. You can use what you learn for totally selfish purposes or you can use it to better your community,

While in school you have benefited from having mentors who taught you and encouraged you as you increased your knowledge and experience. But, as you step out into life, you will have the opportunity to become the mentors. C. S. Lewis said, “Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.” Part of that is actively mentoring those who come after you. Another part of that is living your life in such a way that you are a living example to those around you. It means making the right decisions and doing the right thing whether you think anyone is watching you or not.

Integrity is something that is a part of your most basic character. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.” As you go about your lives, it is you who must live with the decisions you make. That is integrity at its most personal, deep within the real you. So, when you make decisions, you will base them upon the foundation of that integrity of your own mind.

Some of us are introverts and do not seek out much in the way of community, while some of us are extroverts and our life’s breath is community. Regardless of which type we are, we all must function and interact with the community around us. It is that necessity of community that spurs us on to achieve and to help those around us. Part of helping those around you is encouraging those who are struggling that things will get better and that there are people around them who will help them as needed.

Integrity and community are closely interconnected. A person who has a strong sense of community and a strong sense of integrity will do all he or she can to use their gifts and talents to help their community. That person will set the example for those coming after them. This is the type of person you should seek out to follow in your life. This is the type of person you should try to become.

All of the people who have mentored you thus far will continue to mentor you in whatever way possible. Look to them for advice but also look to the example they set for you. The next season of your life starts the moment you receive your diploma today. Believe in yourself and look to your future with excitement. You have had integrity and community modeled before you. Now go out and model it to those who will come after you.

Congratulations graduates!