**Markovetz Speech [EZ Speech No. 16166]**

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Remarks by Mr. John Markovetz to the 2017 graduating class of the [name of school].

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ladies and gentlemen . . . faculty and staff . . . distin­guished guests . . . graduating seniors and parents . . .

welcome to the commencement ceremony for the 2017 graduating class of [name of school]. i feel enormously privileged to be able to address you this evening. as most of you probably know, i’ve been principle here for just a little more than four months now, and i must tell you, the welcome i received from the faculty, the student body, and the wonderful community of parents who’ve entrusted their children’s education to us was truly extraordinary. i quickly learned, of course, that this generosity of heart was no aberation, but a true manifestation of [name of school]’s core values. as it is said in *romans* 15-7: “therefore welcome one another as christ has welcomed you, for the glory of god.” so i feel not only privileged to be standing here, but deeply blessed as well.

now, it’s traditonal for commencement-day speakers to couch their remarks along the lines of “advice-to-the graduates-on-how-to-live-a-good-and-productive-life.” well . . . i’m not sure that john markovetz has anything to say on this subject that the bible hasn’t already covered incredibly well. just read the book, do what it says, and you’ll be all right. end of lecture.

but seriously . . . when i thought about exactly what gems of wisdom i ought to impart to you seniors this evening, it occurred to me that i actually *might* have a couple of things to say that might put a different kind of slant on the subject of living life well.

firstly, i’d like to suggest that — if there’s any one, single key to living a good life — it is to foster and nurture and manifest in all things and in all ways an *attitude of gratitude.*

not one of us gets through this life on our own. throughout our days, we’re helped along the way by our parents, our teachers, our church, our friends, and by the many mentors who’ve given us guidance and counsel through the years. we can achieve little on our own. i don’t care how smart you are, or clever, or diligent, you’re always going to need the help and support of others to achieve your goals in life. and for this, you’re going to “owe” them.

and how do you repay this debt? it’s simple. just say “thank you,” or better yet, “thank you; I’m very grateful.” it’s not good enough simply to *feel* grateful. no. you’ve got to *express* that gratitude straight out loud, and most importantly, you’ve got to *mean* it. you’ve got to make sure that anyone who helps you in any way, large or small, knows that you sincerely appreciate their effort or their help. from the cashier at mcdonald’s to the math teacher who took the extra time to explain quadratic equations when you just couldn’t wrap your mind around the subject, you need to say “thank you” from the heart. as it is said in *thesslonians* 5:18: *“give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God.”*

now, i’m pretty sure that, for most of you, your parents are the people to whom you owe the greatest debt of gratitude. think of all the things they’ve done for you. think of the sacrifices they might have had to make to send you to such a wonderful center of learning as [name of school]. think of all the love and care they’ve lavished upon you from the moment of your birth to this special moment in time. are you thinking . . . ? are you feeling it . . . ? good! now i’d like all the seniors in the audience and all their parents to please stand up.

[after they’ve done so] good! now seniors: i want you to hug your parents and tell them “thank you.” [as they do so] ah . . . that’s so beautiful! you can sit down now, thank you.

now, i’ve said that an attitude of gratitude is perhaps the single most important factor in living happy and productive life. but now, i’d like to talk to you specifically about that life, or more precisely, about your *philosophy* of life as you move forward.

a hundred years before jesus was born, an ancient hebrew scholar and philosopher posed to his students three simple questions. his first question was this: *“if i am not for myself, who shall be for me?”*

now, what do you suppose he meant by this question? he meant that once you’ve reached adulthood, there’s no one else on this earth who’s been put for the sole and express purpose of taking care of *you*. living your life, making decisions in your life, taking care of yourself — these are now *your* responsibilities and yours alone. your parents’ work is done. now you’re on your own. with god as your sheperd, you’re now the master of your fate and the captain of your soul. i do hope and trust that you feel that [name of school] has given you all the tools you’ll need to navigate this wonderful new journey successfully. but though god may remain your co-pilot, you’re flying the plane solo now.

i hope this doesn’t frighten you, because it shouldn’t. rather, it should represent for you a wonderful, liberating freedom and the kind of independence that some of you have sought for years now, and that most of you probably got a little taste of the first time you were allowed to get behind the wheel of an automobile on your own. self-reliance is a *good* thing.

but is self-reliance enough? no . . . it’s not. for we must now consider the second question posed by that ancient philosopher, and that question was:  *“if i am for myself alone, what am i?”*

now what does *that* mean? it means that if my life is only about me, if I am indeed “for myself alone,” then truly I am nothing. *philippians* verses 2 thru 4 sums it up rather succinctly, i think, for it is here that we’re admonished to *“do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves.”*

we were put on this earth for two purposes and two purposes only: the first is to praise god, and the second is to help others. the most important and noble purpose we have on this earth while we’re down here is to relieve the suffering of others, to help others realize their full potential, to give care and succor to those who are in pain, to raise others out of despair and into joy. *this* is the secret of living a meaningful life. *this* is what it means truly to be a christian.

so the secret to a successful life is to — one — develop a genuine attitude of gratitude; two, to express that gratitude openly and freely; and — three — to live a life of service to others. nothing could be simpler, eh . . . ?

but what about that ancient scholar’s third and final question? it was a very simple question inded, and i’m sure you can all fill in the blank, for he asked his students very quietly: “if not now . . . “ [motion with an open palm to prompt the audience to complete the sentence]

thank you very much for your attention, ladies and gentlemen; and to all our graduating seniors, i wish you god’s speed and a prosperous, fulfilling life.

now, let’s all enjoy the rest of this evening’s festivities.

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