

**FOR THE CLASS OF 2021**  
**21 May, 2021**

Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!  
Your kindness should be known to all.



I want to begin by getting something out of the way. Contrary to what many of you may have been told, this was *not* supposed to be the best year of your life. As a matter of fact, I profoundly hope that it isn't, and I'm not just talking about COVID. I hope that the year you meet the person you're going to marry, or the year you hold your son or daughter in your arms for the first time, or the year you walk your daughter up the aisle on her wedding day, or the year you cure cancer, or the year you hear your first confession and give absolution, or the year you help an old lady across a busy street in New York even though you're late for signing a million dollar deal, or the year you walk your kid to church for the first time, or the year you sit with an old friend – a Prep brother – whom you haven't seen for 12 or 17 or 24 or 63 years, or the year you celebrate your 50th Wedding Anniversary. I hope each of those are your best years. You have so much to look forward to. COVID was bad

enough, but please ever don't fall victim to nostalgia, which is a much more fatal disease. And it would be a terrible betrayal of everything we have tried to do for you here if you only prepared for the past, and not for the present and the future, for the past has no use for you or for me, but the present and the future – they need us badly.

That being said, remember that there has been so much wonderful stuff here, even in this hard year. Many of us gathered here in the Chapel at Christmas time. And you all worked with Mr. Krambuhl and pulled off astonishing retreats – retreats that worked for your younger Prep brothers. And you were there for each other through the year; I know that because we didn't lose any of you – that is why we can be here tonight. And you've had the opportunity to celebrate victories and performances and honors. And you've learned things, and not just in the classroom. Some of those things have been hard, difficult lessons. But you have learned from them, even if you're not quite sure what the lesson was yet. And if you have learned something, this has been a very good year.

The story we just heard is an apt one; it's sort of a parable about the past 14 months. The disciples have learned all about God's love. They followed Jesus for three years and saw his miracles and listened to his teachings. They sat with him as he served them, washing their feet, and promising his body and blood to them in the form of bread and wine. They watched Jesus lay down his life for them. They saw him risen from the dead. He entrusted his mission to them. And yet, when he seems gone, they don't know what to do. So they go back to what they know; they go back to what is easy for them. "I'm going fishing," Peter says. And they all say, "We'll go too." They were supposed to be fishers of men, preaching the good news and baptizing the whole world, but now they're just fishers of fish again.

But the funny thing is that Jesus doesn't seem to mind. He comes to them. And he's worried that they haven't caught anything – he actually cares about that. And I get the biggest kick out of the fact that none of

them recognize him until they have the fish in their nets. Then it's like  
“Oh yeah, we've seen this movie.”

And then...then he feeds them breakfast. And he never asks why  
they're there. And he doesn't correct them or yell at them or scold them.  
Not even Peter – Peter who was supposed to be the leader, Peter who  
swore he'd be there for Jesus, Peter who dropped like a fly and denied  
him as soon as the going got tough, Peter who was not there for him.  
No, he simply asks Peter a question: Do you love me more than these;  
do you love me; do you really love me? And he gives Peter something  
to do...look after my sheep.

My brothers, your folks did not send you to Prep, and God did not call  
you here to be fishers of fish. He called you and me, he calls us all to  
catch us up in the mystery of his love. He calls us to bring others along  
into that mystery. And he calls us to that because he knows that that –  
the experience of his love – that and that alone will give us true and  
lasting joy. And it will fill everything else we do everything we do in

life – in classrooms and on stages, in athletics and in labs, at home and at school and at work – everything with God’s love, and the joy that it brings will give life all those things, and not just life for today but for always, not just for a year but for eternity.

And that is what Paul is writing about – Paul who suffered persecution and imprisonment and rejection and who hardly had a home to call his own because he was always on the road – but Paul who ran headlong into God’s forgiving love on that road to Damascus and never forgot it.

It’s not some hippy-hoppy mindless happiness he’s talking about, not sunshine and ponies. No, it’s about finding God and holding on because even in the rough patches – especially in the rough patches – nothing, nothing will separate us from God’s love and that love is forever, and what God loves lives.

And if that is true, brothers, we have nothing to fear. Not even COVID or cicadas. And if we have nothing to fear, we can greet the future with hope. And we can give ourselves generously to it.

And that is what we ask you to do now, brothers – give yourself generously to the future. Look for everything that is true, that is honorable, that is just, pure, lovely, gracious, everything that is excellent and worthy of praise. Because that is what has fed you here. That is what has built your teams and your casts and your choruses. That is what has held you together through this hard year. That is what finally your brotherhood is built on. Be true to that.

And take it with you. And give it to the people you meet along the way. Give it generously, because – you know – that's what this has been about. Giving yourself to an experience not just for yourself but for others. And you know – you know from experience now – that when you do that, when you really give yourself, you don't come away any poorer. That's the joy Paul is writing about.

I'm not going to predict the future. But if you're serious about making this Prep experience what it's meant to be, it's going to take you to some

hard places, just as Jesus says to Peter. I know that a few of you already have that experience, too. But when you get there, just follow. Follow the love you've experienced here – the love you've been trying to learn here; it will not fail you. Trust your God because He won't let you go. He has a future in mind for you that is far beyond your wildest imagination.

Follow him.



AMDG