

Amanda Buhl  
Senior Sermon  
11 May 12

Well good morning,

Many of you might be wondering why this crazy girl choose to do her senior sermon the last day possible amidst all the classes finishing, finals commencing and graduation creeping up quicker than seems possible. I could make something up and say it is because my great skills as an orator that I should save the best for last. Really, truth be told, there is a lot of procrastinating that goes on at college and I thought it would be appropriate to put this off as long as possible.

Wow. What a ride college has been. Sometimes wild, sometimes not. Looking back, it seems like I have been here much longer than 4 years. When you're here, college becomes its own little world. Everything seems to rush past outside while time steadily marches on in here, magically slowing to a crawl twice a year around the end of each semester. Regardless of how quickly the time seems to pass, I have enjoyed my time here immensely. In fact, enjoy doesn't quite seem adequate. I have been so fortunate in my educational experiences which have taken place over two continents and four countries. I've been lost in the jungles of Guatemala, chased lemurs in Madagascar, snorkeled in the blue waters of Belize and done a Prairie home makeover in Newton Hills Park about 45 min that way (points south).

Surprisingly, despite all my experiences, I don't feel particularly different from how I've ever felt. I'm still me with the same interests I've always had. Even though the past four years has been devoted to constant learning, I don't feel any smarter; sometimes, my tests even make me feel dumber. So, when people ask me what I'm studying in school or what sorts of things I'm learning at Augie, my best reply seems to be "a whole lot of stuff." I have learned so many things it's incredible; some useful, some merely interesting, some I'll remember and sorry to my professors but some I won't. It wasn't until I actually started reflecting back over my time here, that I was able to see all the knowledge that I had gained. I was first told to do this by my French professor Dr. Fish. I went into him one day expressing my frustrations that I wasn't making any progress and I did not know what to do different. He told me to look back at my first French papers; it made me feel better. Four years ago at this time, the extent of my French was cheese, please, hello and goodbye. Now, I can actually have an intelligible conversation in French. Then there's biology. Four years ago, terms like ooedegonium, *melanogaster* and *sella turcica* where Greek to me and now, I couldn't forget them if I wanted to. I've had the pleasure of learning everything from genetics to ecology and having experiences like lab assisting and study abroad. Then, there are life skills you learn while in college. You learn time management, the importance of doing your research; you try new things and learn how to interact with people. You'll find you make mistakes but you'll learn from them, and you will likely make a few friends along the way. Of course, when all else fails, there is one life skill that everyone learns, even though it is not likely advertised in any college brochure: when you can't wow them with wisdom, at least try to B.S. with finesse. Sometimes you may not know the answer to something, but pulling trying to pull together what you do already know generally works out pretty well.

The list of things I've learned could go on for a while. Of all these many lessons however, I learned an unexpected one and found that it is probably the most important lesson I've learned here. I've learned that no matter how bad things get, how stressed you are about a test, how frustrated you are for not getting into a class, things always have a funny way of working out. When I was first planning my sermon with Pastor Paul, he asked me to give him an example of a time where something that had "worked out". I'm sure I've had many experiences like this in my life, in fact, in Madagascar amongst all

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the fleas and amoebic dysentery it kind of became our mantra. Most situations, I don't even remember because they generally worked out better than my original plan. There is one however that has been life-changing. When I was a freshman and trying to decide what to take for j-term and spring, my wonderful advisor Dr. Craig suggested that I take German. The rationale behind this is I wanted to study abroad in Denmark at the time, and while different, German would at least put me in the same family of languages. Well, for whatever reason, German is very popular here and the j-term class was full. I was really bummed and not sure what to do. I went to Dr. Craig and he suggested that maybe continuing to learn languages, even if it was not Germanic, would help keep me in the mindset. So, I signed up for French. Now, I had never really had any strong desire to take French or at least never thought I would but that little "happy accident" has shaped the rest of my college career. Without French, I would not have met my good friends Elisabeth and Kelly. Nor would I have been able or had such a strong desire to study abroad in Madagascar. That experience alone with all the people I met and will now be lifelong friends with is incredible in itself. And cheesy as it sounds, without getting into French, I would never have known how much I love this language. Life not following my plans turned out to be the best plan of all.

I like the scripture reading for today. Go figure, I picked it out. But in all seriousness, the verses point to this same lesson, that things have a funny way of working out. My favorite are verses 25 and 26 "And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest?" Wow, how true is that in our world today. I like it. It's like God saying to us, "silly humans, you can't control everything" and it's true. I like too, that He refers to adding an hour as such a small thing. I can't tell you how many times I would have LOVED to add even one more hour to get more sleep. But there again comes to mind that things have a funny way of working out. Whether this shows God actively working in our lives or if He's created us as adaptable creatures, I could not say. I've seen in my religion class this semester that if you ask four different theologians about how involved God is in the world, you'll get five different answers.

Even learning this important lesson won't always stop me from worrying or even being disappointed when things don't work out. I know in life there will be times where I'll be stubborn and want my way just so. There will be times when I'll feel I clearly know best, other people just haven't figured that out yet. But at the end of the day, it is a comfort to know that even if I get a little narrow minded or make a few wrong turns along the way, I have Someone looking out for me who has shown for thousands of years that things always have a funny way of working out.

Amen.