

Senior Sermon

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Untitled (God be with you 'til we meet again)

Hello everyone! My name is Sawyer Vanden Heuvel and yes I am an “AugieholiC”. I am a senior this year at Augie and like most seniors I can't believe how fast my time at Augustana has gone. In just about a week I will be finishing my senior fall semester and then just how quickly this semester will end, so will my senior year. I have met many fantastic friends, amazing faculty, and awesome staff-- yes this in fact the Financial Aid office. What other office on this campus would close to see one of their “kids” speak in chapel? They've kept me fed and nourished and highly caffeinated! and have been my “home away from home”; but I cannot forget the community and faith-founding traditions of this college and for these values I am forever grateful.

Many students can relate to the feeling of wanting to escape. Escaping from school and never looking back. There are many times when I myself have said “I can't wait to leave school; I just want to start my life! Being a senior is scary. There are a lot of worries that comes into this role. I have always been in school and now for the first time I look into my future and school is no longer there. That is a scary realization, friends.

In the second epistle of Peter, Peter writes on the day of the second coming of the LORD:

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.⁹The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

10But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

Yes, friends: finals week will indeed end; you will soon be in the comforts of your own home with delicious food and endless marathons of *A Christmas Story*. Then as Peter writes to remind us: “dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him. Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation”. So be patient my friends, for rest will come to you soon; but remember, the day of the return of our Lord will be far better.

One thing that I’ve learned at my time at Augustana is being in a community surrounded in faith. I am reminded of this sense of community for when in Isaiah it reads:

“All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.”

At Augustana, we are like blades grass. For as the grass grows and as the grass withers is much the same as how people come here and people leave this place, but it is through the word of our God which will endure forever with us. When I think of the Augustana community I think of how Dr. O’Hara so famously speaks in his class that we are in “schole”. Schole, in Greek, is the word in which we get “scholar”, but it also means leisure. Yes friends, those papers, tests, and projects are in fact leisure; but also in this community we are surrounded in “schole” through our friends, classmates, and campus activities. It wasn’t until this year when I can fully say that we are in fact practicing leisurely activities. For me, Augustana College has been the place where I have challenged my faith, questioned about who God is, all while learning a profession. It is at this institution where I have learned how think with my head, but also to think with my heart. Now that, is worth every penny of this liberal arts education.

It seems like only yesterday when I was bombarded with upperclassmen taking my stuff up to Solberg room 236 to meet the wonderful—and kind of strange roommate—Jake Bury.

Now, here I stand reflecting on my times and rich traditions and values of this college. Friends, I challenge you to take the opportunity to be in scholastic. Before you know it, you will be graduating and college will become a memory. Take advantage of those late nights staying up with friends talking just about anything, writing those papers, and soaking in as much knowledge as you can take. Whenever you are sick of school and stresses that go along with life, remember that the Lord is with you always; He is coming again and the word of our God will endure with you forever. Like so many that have gone before me much like the blades of grass, I have said to them as what I will soon say to many of you and that is I pray that "God be with you 'til we meet again".