

**Foundations: In the Beginning... Celebrating the New Day!  
Genesis 1 (selections) AFBC 5.21.17**

Family and friends, we gather here this morning to celebrate the new day! Graduates, we're here specifically to celebrate your new day. More on that in a moment, but first our text (Genesis 1):

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. <sup>3</sup> And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

*On the second day (v.6): "...God said, 'Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.'"*

*On the third day (v.9): "...God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.' <sup>11</sup>...Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.'"*

*On the fourth day (v.14): "...God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.' And it was so."*

*On the fifth day (v.20): "...God said, 'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.'"*

*And then, on the sixth day (v.26-27): "...God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."*

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...and there was light...and it was good!

Today, graduates, it's our privilege to celebrate the light you bring to us. We celebrate the light we've shared together in the past, and the light we'll discover in the future God has planned.

We celebrate the light of knowledge—both intellectual and spiritual knowledge. These are good gifts from our Creator—and they're ours for the taking.

We also celebrate this new day that's dawning in your lives. Beginnings are important. We learn in the first chapter of the Bible—Genesis 1, from which we just read--that that which exists... must first... begin.

Without a beginning, there can be no present... and no future. So we celebrate beginnings of all kinds. Today we celebrate the beginning which is your graduation.

Now, you may be wondering why I'm talking about beginnings. After all, what you're likely experiencing most keenly today... is a sense of ending. A chapter in your life is coming to a close.

You're saying your goodbyes to teachers and fellow students—people who've been very significant in your lives up to this point. You may be experiencing some regret, even some fear.

You know that life is changing. Old, familiar routines are ending; and it's a little frightening. So this is not to minimize in any way your graduation... as an ending.

This is simply to remind all of us that life moves on. There are no stop-action shots, no instant replays, no do-overs. The game of life continues. So we dare not get too caught-up for long in graduation as an ending.

Think of it, instead, as an opening, a beginning, a commencement. This is what makes your graduation such an exciting time for all of us.

On day one of creation, God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." You've experienced some of that light. You've followed the light... when you've known it to be light.

This light has enabled you to embrace your family as the predecessors to your future. It's caused you to receive your

church as a harbor from which to sail and a haven in which to rest.

The light has enabled you to claim your school as the delivery room in which you were “birthed” as students, followers, leaders, team members, and even individuals, hopefully... in the midst of a crowd of your peers. Yes, you’ve all experienced some light already.

But keep your eyes open, graduates. There’s even more light just around the corner. Graduation means that one day is ending; but a new day is dawning.

You’re starting a journey toward a new moment in time that’s potentially brighter than anything you’ve ever known before. As you pack your bags, I want to suggest that you need to be asking yourselves these questions:

- 1. How did I get here?**
- 2. Where do I go from here?** And finally,
- 3. Who will go with me?**

**1.** I hope you’re fully aware of **how you got to this point in life**. It didn’t just happen, you know. Lots of folks have been involved with you already on your journey through life.

There are parents who celebrated your very first new day—the day of your birth! They celebrated by loving you, caring for you—changing your diapers and wiping your runny nose, by sharing a lot of hopes and dreams for you—hopes and dreams that began before you were even born.

Sort of like God, maybe--back there...“in the beginning,” when He gave birth to the world. There was lots of love present; lots of hopes and dreams, too.

In addition to parents, there’ve been many others involved in getting you here. Sir Arthur Keith, the Scottish anthropologist, once said that if 300 individuals were taken out of history, we would still be living in the Stone Age. And he’d never even heard the names “Gates, Jobs, or Zuckerberg!”

Actually, if certain people were removed from any of our lives, WE wouldn’t be here this morning. We wouldn’t be who and what we

are. You've heard the stories about how your mom and dad met and married. Well, what if *that* hadn't happened?

Many others have played lesser, but still important, roles in your lives: relatives, neighbors and friends of your family, school teachers and Sunday school teachers, ministers and coaches.

You've also been part of a community. You've spent much of your time in this place we love called Anderson, SC. Some of you have been involved in Scouts, music lessons, various sports, and more.

Many people have impacted your lives—lots of good, God-created-and-gifted people. Where would you be today without them? Be grateful for all these shapers of your personal history—be grateful to God... and... to them!

Although you really haven't lived so long yet, you've seen lots of history in the making—tons of changes: some good, some bad, no doubt--but lots of change...more than any generation before you.

This story keeps gaining credence, it seems: the High School student who flunked history and was being reprimanded by his dad. "When I was in high school," his disappointed Father said, "history was my easiest subject."

"Big deal!" his son replied. "When you were my age, what had happened?"

That stretches the point a bit; but honestly, so much has happened during the relatively brief days of your lives thus far. Up till now, you've been students, observers of history.

But as you leave your student days behind (either now, or in a few years), you'll embark upon adulthood and become shapers of history—especially your own personal history.

**2.** Which brings us to the second question you each need to ask yourself: "**Where do I go from here?**" What are your plans--your goals and dreams? Dreams are important. The houses we dream about are often the ones we eventually live in.

You need dreams and goals—things to strive toward in life. Without them, you could find yourself floundering--getting

nowhere. You'll get somewhere, of course--just not anywhere you would personally choose to go.

When God said, "Let there be light...land and water...fish and fowl and cattle...and, finally, as His crowning act of creation, people—people made in God's own image! When God brought everything into being, He had a dream. And it was good—very good!

Humankind has often played havoc with that good purpose. God made us good. He created us to live in harmony with Him and one another; but He also made us as free creatures, with minds and wills of our own.

We can be what we're meant to be; or we can choose to be something else—something less: less productive, less fulfilled, less joyful—that's what our rebellion against God does for us. It always causes us to be something less than what we could and should be.

But the question we all must ask ourselves is "Why settle for less?" Why not, instead, line up our dreams with God's.

He has a dream—a goal and purpose--for each one of us. To set our sights on that purpose, to pursue it with every ounce of our being, is to be at our best.

It is to be all that God intends for our lives. God made us. He made us good. He knows what is best for us, and that's exactly what He wants most.

Where are you going from here graduates? What will our next new day look like? And the rest of us would do well to ask ourselves this question, too. What important destinations are still before us in life? Will these new days be good days for us?

God has uniquely gifted each one of us. There are talents, abilities and potentials that need to be realized in our lives. To make the most of them is our God-given responsibility.

Where are we going from here? I hope we're seeking to align our lives with God's purposes for them, and that we're striving to keep our lives smack-dab in the middle of God's will. That's the only way to be sure the days ahead are good.

**3.** Now, one more question, graduates. As you make your way through life, ask yourself **“Who’s going with me?”**

If you try to “go it alone,” I’m afraid you’ll miss out on a very important part of life. You’ll never quite be all that you were created to be—if you choose to try and go it alone.

But you needn’t do that. No doubt, there are plenty of folks going with you. Those people we talked about earlier—parents, teachers, neighbors, friends—their interest in you will follow after you. Their dreams for you will continue right along with you.

And the people gathered here—your church family—we’ll be going with you if you let us. Our prayers, encouragement, and interest in you—all these will go with you. And we’ll be right here in the future, hoping that you’ll continue to be a part of us in some way, but always looking forward to your return.

There are still people in my home church who check on me from time to time—not as many now—I’ve been away quite a while—but for years, they would call to say they’re thinking about me, praying for me, wishing the best for me.

Listen, that means a lot! I cherish their companionship with me on this journey, and I hope you feel the same about your church family. I hope we’re being this kind of church family for you.

There will be others to go with you through life, some you haven’t even met yet. For most of you, there will likely be one very special person, a mate.

Be especially careful and sincerely seek God’s guidance on this, graduates, because few decisions will affect your lives more significantly than this one! That’s in Genesis 2, by the way, so more on that later!

Still, there’s one relationship that matters even more than your mate. I say this because all of life’s relationships dim in the light of God’s companionship with you. He’s the most important relation of all, and this will be true for all of life and eternity.

Now I realize that, for many people, God feels awfully far away. They question whether they can actually have a relationship with

God. Sort of like the person who asked, "What I really want to know is this: 'Does God know my name?'"

Well, yes, He does. He knows each one of us—and not just by name. He knows us even better than we know ourselves.

And God wants us to know Him. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world, because God wants us to know His name, and to really know what He's like.

If you want to get to know God, then get to know Jesus. God has reached out to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. And He's said to us, "I love you. I want to be your companion in life. I want to help you to be all that you can be—all that I created you to be."

This can only happen, friends, when we allow Jesus Christ to be Lord! Everything else I've shared with you is important—but this matters most.

Wherever life takes you from here—off to college, into the workforce, married or single, whatever—follow Christ. Follow Christ faithfully and let Him be Lord of your life!