



# ***“It Is Well, With My Soul”***

Commencement Address to the Class of 2017  
by **Dr. Ray Reynolds (5-13-17)**

To the family and friends of these distinguished students... to the faculty and staff of this great Christian school... and to these graduating seniors... I want to say it is an honor to present the commencement address for the 2017 graduate class of SCA. This is the third time that I have had this honor. For 10 years I have been privileged to be a part of Snook Christian Academy as a volunteer, chapel teacher, and encourager of this great work. It is always a pleasure to visit SCA. These kids have probably heard me speak a 100x, but hopefully this message will be one that is truly a blessing. Before we begin the message, I have been asked to lead the song “*It Is Well.*” (SING) Please be seated. (PRAY)

Here you are! You’ve finally made it! By the time a high school senior gets to where you are – after 13 years of school - they have experienced 16,380 hours of instruction... 9,902 hours of homework (17.5 hours each week for the past 4 years)... consumed 2,340 school meals... read 90 textbooks... participated in over 100 extra activities like field days, plays, and field trips... taken over 200 tests... had 50 different teachers... and been absent for 26 sick days. There is a 90% chance you’ve seen someone fall asleep at their desk... a 43% chance you’ve watched someone vomit at school and a 5% chance it was on the teacher or another person... 25% chance you’ve been in at least one fight... a 20% chance someone has tried to take your lunch money... an 8% chance you have eaten a crayon and/or glue... a 5% chance you’ve been sent to the principal’s office AND more importantly, a 99.9% chance you will miss something about it.

Since the song chosen for graduation was “It Is Well” I have chosen to talk about dealing with the “Storms of Life.” I want to read some Scriptures to you... **Matthew 8:23-27, 14:22-23.** There are basically four kinds of storms:

- 1) ***Lightning Storms***—There are 3,000,000 strikes day... can travel 136,000... be the size of a thumb... 54,000 degrees (5x hotter than the surface of the sun). ***Sometimes the storms of life hit you unexpectedly...*** the day you failed a test... when you didn’t make the team... you lost someone you love... the moment after an injury where you ache in your heart, knowing your future is uncertain and recovery will be a long (DAVID experienced the same thing - **Psalm 55:8**).
- 2) ***Hail Storms***—They can be pea size, golf ball, baseball or even grapefruit size... the largest ever documented in Colleyville, KS, in 1970 was 5.67 inches and 1.67 lbs... in Orient, IO, they’ve had hail drifts up to six feet. ***Sometimes the storms of life beat you down and leave scars that won’t go away...*** the betrayal that breaks your heart... the divorce that broke up your family... the chronic illness that breaks down the body and the spirit of someone you love (DANIEL experienced the same thing – **Daniel 1:1-8**).
- 3) ***Wind Storms***— The “Derecho” straight-line winds can be 35-70 mph... one of the worst in MI and WI was in 1977 for 15½ hours... damage was 20 miles wide... 1,850,000 acres of forest damaged. ***Sometimes the storms of life just won’t let up...*** the shadow of yesterday’s sins... the haunting consequences that won’t go away... the fear lingering on the horizon despite all that you do...the temptations and trials that just won’t stop (JONAH experienced the same thing – **Jonah 2:2-9**).

- 4) ***Flash Floods***—The ground gets so saturated it cannot absorb any more water... of all the phenomena of nature this brings the most destruction and it is the most deadly... 127 deaths annually (73 die by lightning, 65 by tornado, etc.). ***Sometimes the storms of life overwhelm us and open up the ground around us...*** This makes us question, “Why?” Then it’s replaced with the question, “What else?” or “What now?” (JOB experienced the same thing - **Job 5:7, 9:17, 14:1**).

The seniors chose to sing “It Is Well” during this ceremony. You may be familiar with the story of the song. How a man lost all of his children on November 21, 1873 in a tragic accident at sea. He booked passage on the next available ship and went to join his grieving wife – who had survived – and was taken to Wales. When his ship passed over the shipwreck where 226 of 313 passengers had perished... He was overwhelmed with emotion. He went back below deck and wrote these words:

*When peace like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll,  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, “It is well, it is well with my soul.”  
Chorus: It is well with my soul... It is well...it is well with my soul*

How could he write these words? I can tell you how. Go back to those two Bible passages I noted earlier (**Matthew 8:23-27, 14:22-23**). First, remember that Jesus walked on the water. He was not afraid of the storm. He even called to Peter to come out on the water with Him. As you leave here and go out into the world you will experience the storms of life. Some storms you will see coming a mile away. Others may come upon you unaware. However, in all the storms of life Jesus welcomes us to take His hand and walk on the waves. If we slip and fall, He will take our hand and lift us up! He will not let us drown.

Second, remember how He calmed the storm. The Lord has much more faith in us than we have in ourselves. Jesus put them in that boat. He told them to launch out into the deep. You will be headed into deep waters, into the great unknown, but if Jesus is in your boat you are safe. You have not only a friend with you, but you have the Giver of Life, the Son of the Living God, the Lord of Lords & the King of Kings, the Creator & Sustainer of Life, the Almighty One, the Great I Am, the Alpha & Omega, an Advocate & High Priest, the Author & Finisher of your faith, the Chief Cornerstone, the Good Shepherd, the One who is Faithful & True, the Sacrificial Lamb of God who took your place at the cross and takes away the sins of the world, the Messiah & Mediator of the New Covenant, a Redeemer, a Rock, a Refuge, the Resurrection, the Way, Truth & the Life, the True Vine, the Living Word, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, and Prince of Peace. The list goes on and on!

Let the storms come. Let the waters rise. Let the wind, hail, and lightning surround us. We don’t welcome it, but we don’t fear it either. Because if Jesus is in our boat, and if we have built our house upon the mighty foundation of Jesus Christ, the storms of life will not prevail! We know that “*the peace of God...surpasses all understanding*” (**Philippians 4:7**). We know that if God is for us NO ONE can stand against us (**Romans 8:31**). We know that the Lord has promised NEVER to leave us or forsake us (**Hebrews 13:5**). He will be with us always (**Matthew 28:20**).

Seniors... I can promise you, that if you trust in Him, God will give you the strength. He will grant you the wisdom. Jesus will be there with you. God’s Holy Spirit will guide you. And, God’s Holy Word will instruct you. You can succeed. You can & will do great things. Don’t give up. Don’t quit. Keep Jesus in your boat! When He calls you... walk on the water. When you’ve had enough of the storms... call on Him to put the storm in its place. But no matter what happens, I pray you can say, “It Is Well With My Soul.” (PRAY)