

2014 Salutatorian Address: Autumn Meyer

Introduction: Hello class, family, and friends! Over the last few weeks I asked multiple people what they wanted to hear from my speech today and ended up really frustrated trying to make a speech that fit every requirement. Then I realized that I can't give a speech that pleases every single person in this audience so I decided to just share what I want to share and what I believe God is directing me to share. I hope and pray you guys will appreciate it and if not, there're still two speeches left so maybe you'll like one of those.

Main point: I asked myself what the most important thing was that I learned over the course of the last 4 years. It's this (as cliché as it sounds): Don't try to be perfect. I tried to be perfect for a long time and then realized that, "Hey, I'm a fallible human being who *cannot* be perfect." And guys, let's think of our teachers. We all know we have imperfect teachers. Sometimes Mr. Caves promises we'll "get after it" in class and we end up spending the first 20 minutes eating treats. Or sometimes Mr. Luscombe writes the wrong thing on the board, but we just go with it because "Kids, Daddy's always right." And I've been called April, Amber, Amy, (and probably more wrong names that I've forgotten) by my teachers over the last 4 years. But none of these mistakes has ever made me respect my teachers any less, because, honestly, there's nothing unattractive about being imperfect. God isn't expecting us to be perfect – he's expecting us to trust Him and glorify Him with our lives – but I've never read a verse that says, "Put on a front and make everyone think you're perfect and this will glorify God." (If you've read a verse like that, then you can disregard this speech.) But for the rest of you: My favorite passage over the last 2 years has been 2 Corinthians 12 where Paul is talking about how he has a "thorn in the flesh" and how he asked God to remove it but God denied that wish and instead replied, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." If God's power is "made perfect" in our weakness, then why do we have to pretend we don't have weaknesses? When we do that, we essentially tell God that we have got this on our own and let me tell you, self-sufficiency is fun for about 5 minutes until you realize that when you stifle God's power, you've really got nothing going for you. I know that I personally have a lot of weaknesses that I've begged God to take away – for example anxiety. I get really nervous for, honestly most things that I do. If you've ever...talked to me...you probably know that. Some of that anxiety never goes away – it might be my "thorn in the flesh." But if I remember that I don't have to be perfect, God provides grace for my anxiety.

And like I said earlier, imperfection is not unattractive. I guess I don't know about everyone else, but I love to see when a teacher openly admits their struggles to the students, because it shows that a Christ-like leader isn't one who hides. I remember on Mrs. Augustine's first day she shared her testimony. If you know her at all you know she is extremely passionate about her job and her students and this passion was very evident in her testimony that day. Her willingness to let us into her life on that first day showed me the power of vulnerability. I'm sure it wasn't exactly an easy thing to do. But almost every moment where I've most seen Christ work in this school has been when someone – teacher or student or staff – shares their heart, genuinely and without

reservation. I honestly think that being willing to be weak and let God be strong is what those people have shown us through their lives and what we now need to emulate as we graduate and move on from this point.

Conclusion: None of this that I'm saying is meant to convince you that we aren't supposed to live a holy life. But a holy life means a "set-apart life" not a "perfect life" which is very different. When we are "set-apart," we are chosen for God's purpose, which requires us to find strength in Him. We have to admit our weaknesses and allow God's grace to cover us or our "holy life" will just be a life of fraud. People, let's not be frauds. Let's be followers of Christ who enter our society of hurting, lost people and show them the grace and power and love of God and the freedom that comes through reliance and trust in Him.