5-29-1969

1969 Will Rogers High School Commencement Address

Oral Roberts

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WILL ROGERS HIGH COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS BY ORAL ROBERTS

May 29, 1969

Knight: Graduates and ladies and gentlemen. I bid you welcome to the 30th graduation exercises for the Will Rogers High School. The board of education and Doctor Gordon Cawelti the superintendent of the Tulsa Public Schools sends you greetings and extend their congratulations on the event of this graduation exercise of your sons and daughters. Those who are seated on the platform you have heard from Reverend Davis who is the father of Alene Davis. Next may I present Mr. Ernest Darling counselor of the graduating class.

It is a honor to again introduce and present to you a distinguished Tulsa citizen who is identified not only within our community as an outstanding world religious leader but is known through out the world for his genuine interest in youth and their education. Reverend Oral Roberts is a native Oklahoman who began his evangelistic ministry in 1947 in our dear state. Since that time it has been estimated that 14 million people have been won to Christ through his crusades, his literature, the radio and television programs, direct mail counseling and other media. His radio broadcast began in 1948 and was heard each week around the world. Recently Will Rogers High School student body was privileged to have a preview of the program Contact in a one hour TV special. This program will be presented during the month of June to approximately 190 million people who do not attend church regularly. Overseas crusades have taken Reverend Roberts into Australia, South Africa, Finland, Formosa, Germany, Japan, Poland, the Philippine Islands, Puerto Rico, Rhodesia, England, Brazil, Indonesia, Chile and East Africa. In the summer of 1968, the students from Oral Roberts
University accompanied him, an evangelistic team to 14 countries and a major crusade into Kenya, East Africa. Reverend Roberts is indeed an unique man of God whose ministry has been felt in the lives and homes of millions. We in Tulsa are particularly pleased that he's seen fit to make Tulsa the home of Oral Roberts University. An institution with a great program and a great future. It has been my privilege to be a friend of Oral Roberts and to be a part of many things in which he has genuine interest and dedication namely a deep concern for the future and welfare of all young people. It would be difficult to measure the value and the power of this man's influence. He is indeed an asset to our community for his contribution to the educational environment that provides for the utmost of care for the youth of this community. Oral and Evelyn Roberts are extremely proud of their family. Of two sons, Ronald and Richard, and two daughters, Rebecca and Roberts and two granddaughters, Brenda and Marsha. We in the Tulsa public schools are glad to claim him and his family as excellent citizens and patrons and supporters of the Tulsa public schools. It is again an honor and a privilege for me to present Reverend Oral Roberts.

OR: Thank you very much. Good evening. After traveling around the world I'm especially happy to be an American and throughout the states of America I'm especially happy to be an Oklahoman. And after having been in the major cities of the nations of the world I'm especially happy to be a Tulsan and I'm delighted to be a part of this graduating class from Will Rogers which I characterize as the up, up and away high school. It's real great to be here with Dr. Knight and the members of the, on the platform, the guests on the platform, and all the parents and I should like to speak to you tonight on this subject this is no time to cop out and I want to base my remarks on one word, relationship. We hear a lot about the generation
gap and the communication gap and the gap between the races or the gap between
the classes and after dealing with many thousands of people face to face
and hand to hand and looking at the thing seriously I believe that there
is no real communication gap, there is no real generation gap but there is
a very real relationship gap. For example if I know you and you know me
if we have a relationship between each other, if I were to hear something
about you of a negative nature which would cause me ordinarily to be
suspicious of you I would not believe what I heard, neither would you
believe what you heard about me because we have a relationship and we
would sit down and start to talk and pretty soon we would find out what
the problem is and in our relationship one with another we would have an
immediate communication, heart to heart and mind to mind. So this word
relationship has come to mean a great deal to me. First of all I think
that you and I should have a relationship with God. I think we have it
whether we want it or not. But if we don't really want it we develope
this communication problem. Now in the Bible there is a young man by
the name of Philip who was one of the followers of Jesus. And one day
he came to Jesus and asked him about God. He said to him, tell us about
the father, show us the father. Jesus said well have I been with you so
long Philip and you have not seen the father. If you have seen me you
have seen the father. In other words, Philip was disturbed about the
existence of God. He wanted to know if God existed, if God were real,
if he should have a relationship with God and if he should how could he
do it and Jesus then told him that he himself had personalized God. When
God wanted to show himself to people he wrapped up his love as a person
and had him born as a baby and then he grew up as a boy and a man and in
a sense the physical life of Jesus was a handle that he gave people through
which they could understand God. Philip asked questions about God and I hope everyone of you is asking questions about God and if you are disturbed to the extent that you want to know about his existence that's good. But you can go ahead and have a relationship with God. Helen Keller, this great American who recently died, was born deaf and blind and without speech. You recall was the daughter of a Doctor in Alabama and they sent off to Boston to get Anne Sullivan a teacher of the blind who herself was partially blind. At that time no similar human being had ever been taught how to communicate. Helen Keller was more like an animal than a human being. Finally Anne Sullivan realized the communication problem and the generation gap between her and Helen was so acute that she literally physically separated the child from her parents and took her out to a little cabin behind the main house and they lived together week after week until they developed as much of a relationship as was possible as long as this child was more like an animal. And day after day she would spell into the child's hand words. She would have the child put her hand upon her lips and the teacher would talk. It took weeks and months for her to finally get through. One day they were pumping water and while the little girl had her hand under the water spout the teacher automatically spelled into her hand w-a-t-e-r and all of a sudden the light dawned and Helen realized that water had a name and she was excited. She fell down to get her feet down and to get her feet on the ground and the teacher spelled into her hand e-a-r-t-h and grass g-r-a-s-s and she ran to the house and beat on the side of the house and the teacher spelled h-o-u-s-e and out in the orchard to the trees and the wind and she opened up a whole new world for Helen Keller. Eventually she realized though that she had to teach this child about the existence of God and day after day she would spell into her hand Helen there is a God. And he is a loving being who created
all of us and made us in his image and someday Helen you must know God
you must have a relationship with God. It has been very difficult to
break through the animate to this child's mind. It was far more difficult
to break through into the area of the inanimate but she stayed with it
day after day and week after week spelling into her hand, G-o-d, G-o-d
Helen there is a God and one day the light dawned on the child's face
and she understood what the teacher was trying to convey, there is a God
and this is what she spelled back in the hand of the teacher. Teacher, I'm
so glad you told me his name. For God has spoken to me many times. Now
think about in this little girl's mind where she was deaf, blind and without
speech. She had already begun to understand there was a God and to ask
questions about God and now she gets answers. And you can get answers
to that question and I believe that if you get answers to the question
about God and you learn to relate yourself to God then you will be able
to relate yourself to people. and if you don't relate yourself to God
you will never truly relate yourself to people. And the second thing
that I think is very important is that you develop a relationship with a
church here I'm not talking about a particular denomination but about the
body. All the people in the world who have turned themselves toward God
however, imperfectly but earnestly coming together in groups and trying
to build something better in the world. Now they tell me that a cancer
cell is an outlaw cell. A cancer cell breaks away from the other cells
and feeds on the body tissues until it destroys itself and the body from
which it has separated itself. In the Bible it told about Judas Iscariot
who became an outlaw human being. A cancer cell. He broke away from the
body of the disciples and it was he who betrayed Christ and broke the circle
through which the men entered and crucified of Nazareth. Now the church
is often thought of as the establishment. And many young people today
feel that the church is speaking to them or that the establishment is speaking their language. Now I understand this because I had that problem when I was a teen ager. As a teen ager growing up in Oklahoma I grew apart from my parents, from the church and from God and I once doubted the existence of God. And eventually I ran away from home and did not return for about a year at which time I collapsed in a basketball tournament and my coach carried me home to my parents and I was desparately and deathly ill. But when I was hope this was when I developed a relationship. I developed a relationship with God. And a relationship with the church and when I did I no longer had a communication problem with my parents, a communication problem with the establishment or the church. I felt at peace with myself and with the people with whom I had to do. What is the church, what is the establishment? It's people. It's people who are trying to do something better. Admittedly we don't always do what we ought to do. In traveling over the world, particularly Russia where they have cut down from the church. And when the church is now suppressed, where the people are not allowed together in their earnestness and to worship God and to bring forth the goodness of their lives there is a feeling in that country that is so strange, so desparate, so ugly so horrible that I did not enjoy one moment when I was in Russia. I was so glad to get out. And I know this that the establishment is your neighbors, is your parents, your teachers. People living all around you and the only other alternative is that which is opposite college and these isms are like cancer cells they are feeding on the bodies tissues. They are not part of the answer but part of the problem. But if we have a relationship with God, we have a relationship with the church where we are willing to take the responsibility and we can really learn to live. Philip accepted a position in the church 2,000 years ago. He accepted responsibility and the church really
should not be looked upon as a large group of people but a single individual trying to do what is right. And then Philip established a relationship with the community. We are told that he went down to Samaria. Now Samaria was different from Jerusalem was counted the chosen city but Samaria had many problems. It was a city of racial problems, many social problems, poverty problems and class problems. All kinds of people had come there, it was a melting pot. Many of the scum of the world was there and this is where Philip went in a relationship he had with God, with the church. He felt the compassion for human beings and he went down to Samaria and touched the people there. I think it's significant that thousands of students entering college now are not looking as much toward the natural sciences as they are to the social sciences. When I hear of riots and disturbances on the campuses and I have seen some of them face to face I don't react quite the same way that some do. I try to listen to what they are saying to me. I think that one thing they are trying to say is that I am a human being. I am a person I'm not a thing. And I want you to look upon me as a person. Now once they have reached that point, seemingly they don't have an answer for the rest of us. And they become part of the problem rather than part of the answer. But everywhere on every side people want to feel our care and our protection. Perhaps the strongest and the best feeling that you have ever felt in your life is compassion. When you see a little baby and you want to take it that's the feeling that you get about people when you relate to people. One of the militants in our city and we only have a few, I try to know them everyone of them, said to me, Mr. Roberts I can make one telephone call to Washington, D.C. in New York City and in one hour Tulsa will be burning down. Can you give me one reason why I should not make that telephone call? What would you have said to him? I said to him, Sir, if you have a relationship with people you will not want to burn
any of their houses down. Or any of their schools. If you have a relationship
you will have a compassion for those people. And you won't desire to make
that phone call. I recall as a young convert when I was still in my teens
I got carried away with externals of my religion. And it brings my point
tonight. I went to stay with a relative and since I had become a new
Christian convert I had been taught that I should offer thanks for my
food. So when we arrived at this house and we sat down to eat, I was thinking
about this and I saw that they were not going to offer thanks so I said will
you let me offer thanks and the head of the house said, well go ahead if you
want to we are here to eat. And I didn't get to offer thanks, I thought
about it and then it dawned on me. I was not really concerned about this
man and his family. I was concerned about offering thanks. My mind was on
the external. I didn't really care for them so I thought, now I'm going to
offer thanks for everything I eat but I'm going to do it in a way that they
won't know it but God will know it. So I stayed a week and I decided
that I would express what I felt about these people and I had a wonderful
feeling toward them. And the last meal we had we sat down and this man
turned to me and said Oral would you offer thanks for our food. I have
never forgotten that. We in the church can get carried away with externals
and we need you to jerk us to attention and to some of you are jerking us to
real good attention I assure you and the establishment needs someone to
remind them that it's not the externals that really count it's the care that
we have and finally this young man developed a relationship with another
human being and in the book of Acts in the New Testament this young Philip
was in a desert and he saw a chariot racing across the desert in which
there was an outstanding man. This man was the treasurer of the Nation
of Ethiopia and he was reading in the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament
and in Philip's heart he heard a voice, go join thyself to that chariot.
and he climbed up in that chariot and sat down. Now it so happens that the man was black and Philip was of the white race. One of the most beautiful relationships in the Bible is exemplified here. A high governmental official who was a black man, a young man of the white race who had come directly from Jesus Christ met in the desert and the while man felt an urge to join himself to that chariot, climbed up in it and sat down and they began to talk about something of common interest, something in the Bible and there they became friends. There was no communication problem between them. There was no problem of nationalism between them. They developed a relationship. Yesterday I talked with a man in our town and he was talking about the minority race and what they needed and what they wanted and what we had to do to satisfy them and when he finished I said you know your very conversation is part of the problem. He said what do you mean. I said these people don't really want something given to them. He looked at me and he said, well explain yourself and I said, they would just like to have a relationship with you and me and all of us. Where we live side by side, we work side by side, we are human beings side by side. We discuss things side by side. We develop a relationship, young people this is what you are going to face all your life. If you get a job this summer you need a relationship with your boss. If you don't have it then you will have a communication problem. You are going off to college, many of you and if you don't get a relationship with your professor you may not even pass. If you don't get a relationship with other kids on the campus you will develop a great communication problem. There is a young lad that came to our campus a few months ago and as I was passing by the men's dorm he said oh President Roberts could I see you a minute? I said yes, he said I have a terrible problem. I said what is it and he said I came here because I thought I would find happiness here but I have been miserable ever since
I came. Well I said what have you been doing about it and well he said I've been in my room a lot and I've been in crowds, wait a minute let me tell you what you have been doing. You have been in your room, you've had your Bible, you have been reading your Bible alot, you have been praying almost day and night he said how do you know? I said when you seek happiness like that you will never find it. You can read your Bible day and night and be religious day and night and never really be religious. You will never have a relationship with God or with anybody else. And I said have you ever asked a student on this campus if he has a problem. He said no I've been too concerned with my own. I said the next thing that you do when you meet a girl or boy, find out if they have a problem and see what you can do about it. I wish you could know this young man tonight. He's getting ready to go overseas to spend a year. He's a towering young man but he almost cop out in fact he was ready to break his relationship and go back to South Carolina. Today he is on a mission of great importance. He's going to make it big. He found out the more you seek happiness relations but when you get a relationship with other people somehow your own problems are answered. You wrap yourself in yourself and you are a mighty small package. I heard about a missionary who was trying to get into an area where the people had never heard the gospel. He had to go through thick jungle and was following his guide. They came to a jungle that was so thick that they had to take their axes and cut their way through. finally the jungle blotted out the sun and there they were in the darkness. The missionary cried guide how are we going to find our way out of here. The guide said missionary you want to know how we are going to find our way out of here and he said yes. He said I am your way and the reason I'm not talking about education and about your pulls tonight. I know you have heard that. I want to talk about
something you are going to face every day of your life as long as you live
God is your way. Your relationship with God however you find it find it.
Your relationship with the church because only the universities and the
church have survived as institutions through the centuries. The university
deals with the mind and the church with the soul and we are trying to
break that gap. Trying to get the church and the university to have a
relationship so there will be no communication problem between them. A
relationship with God, a relationship with the church. And a real care for
human beings. Whether anybody knows it or not. And you care for people if
they are red, or white, black or yellow or brown or any shade between we
are human beings together. And I knew it. Any person who does this will
make it and he will make it big. God bless you.