

Ian Ferguson

Graduation Speech

A Speech About the Future

Tonight, I would like to speak on a very pressing issue. I am sure that no one here would mind a speech about the conflict in the Middle East, or about the need for election system reforms (which, let me tell you, is ripe territory for a few puns and what-not). And I am sure no one here would object to me talking about the need to build community. However, I have chosen to speak about one of the most lofty, most nebulous concepts. A concept that is spoken about in hushed tones and hurried whispers. A concept that is known only vaguely and ominously as “the future.”

<Pause for effect>

So, without further ado, I would like, if I may, to present to you, for your listening pleasure, a little speech that I like to call, “A Speech About the Future.”

<Wait for Applause>

Graduation is a particularly appropriate time to discuss the future as it represents a major crossroads in the life of any individual. It is a time when teens emerge from the cocoons of high school into the ripe orchard of the adult world. A time when teens may spread their wings and soar on the winds of their dreams. A time when they may board the airplane of hope bound for the blissful land of opportunity and success. Sadly, it may also be a time where such youths crash into the harsh oceans of reality, or hitch rides in the greasy dump trucks of misfortune. But as we squint and shield our eyes from the blinding glare of the dawn of the new millennium, we cannot help but ask, “What is this grand dream, this quest, this final frontier if you will, which we call the future?”

In AP English we learned to look up words that were new to us. So I did just that.

Consulting my good friend Webster, I learned the following about the future:

Fu-ture: from the Latin *futurus* meaning “about to be”.

1. Of, relating to, or constituting a verb tense expressive of time yet to come.
2. A time that is to come.
3. That which is going to happen.

Now we know what the word future means; all the stuff that hasn't happened yet.

Hmmm, well I don't know about you, but I'm curious to know what *will* happen. Will the stock market go up or down? Will the Mariners make it to the World Series? Will airline tickets ever be a constant price? Webster doesn't say. But perhaps we can find the secrets of the universe, tiny nuggets of truth, tucked away in some long ignored source.

In his book, The Dilbert Future, Scott Adams creator of the Dilbert comic strip has a lot to say about the future. Some of it may surprise you; some of it may even shock you.

Prediction 1: Life in the future will not be like Star Trek.

<Long sigh> oh well.

Prediction 2: In the future, technology will continue to make our lives harder and many of us will be delighted about it.

I envision a world where your toaster starts giving messages like, “General Protection Fault” or “An error has occurred”, requiring you to reboot. I imagine this will coincide roughly with the time that Microsoft takes over the world.

Prediction 3: Two things that will never improve in the future are airlines and bicycle seats.

Well, Mr. Adams does offer some very tantalizing and very true nuggets, however, they seem to be a bit, well, obvious and general.

Now, there does happen to be an excellent place to go for all sorts of information, which can perhaps shed some light on the future. The book of James, chapter four, verses thirteen through sixteen say:

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.’ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, *you ought* to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.’ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.”

The truth of the matter is, we who are finite and locked inside time and space don't know what tomorrow will be like. We may make all sorts of plans, plans for college, plans for marriage, plans for what job we will get, where we will live, what we will do for the rest of our lives. And that is ok. Making plans is most often preferable to spur of the moment thinking. Proverbs 20:4 say, “A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.” Planning is wise, but *flexibility* is key. Often our plans and the Lord's plans will go in totally opposite directions. I, and I am sure all of you, can pick out specific times where God has closed doors, guiding you to His will. The clearest and most recent incident of this for me was choosing which college to attend. God and I had vastly different ideas as to where would be the best for me. And, as is usually the case, God won that disagreement. Sometimes God closes one door and opens another. Even if you are walking close beside Him, He may throw in a curve or two. *Be flexible*. It may not seem like it, but God's plan is guaranteed to be better in the long run. Jeremiah 29:11, “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

I just hope that in the future improving bicycle seats is on His to-do list.