

# **Sun., June 7, Outdoor Worship**

## **Graduation Sunday, Holy Communion**

Message: "Soaring without Seeing"

Memory Verse: "Give me your lantern and compass, give me a map, So I can find my way to the sacred mountain, to the place of your presence" -Psalm 43:3

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-2, Philippians 2:12-13

Blurb: This Sunday we honor our graduates and offer prayers over them as they launch into the next chapter of their lives. The message is geared for them, but for all of us. How do we soar as God's people when we can't see precisely where we're going? The answer comes in the Holy Spirit, who lifts our wings and sends us in the right direction.

Graduates: High School:

Armando Lorenzi (Forest Lake HS): Confirmation Mentor: Louis James

James Richter (Chicago Lakes HS): Confirmation Mentor: Ray Rought

Max Thompson (Ely): Confirmation Mentor: Jim Letourneau

*Worship leaders are under the tent.*

*People are invited to sit in lawn chairs, spacing 6 feet apart from other families.*

*People can also park facing the leaders tent and stay in their vehicles.*

*Each person gets Holy Communion elements when they arrive.*

*Fellowship hall door open for bathrooms.*

*Please turn off car engines to help everyone hear better.*

**Opening Music:** -Pastor Andrew

**Welcome** -Pastor David

Graduation Sunday

Holy Communion

**Memory Verse** -Pastor David

"Give me your lantern and compass, give me a map, So I can find my way to the sacred mountain, to the place of your presence" -Psalm 43:3

**Worship Music Set** -Sanctify

*God of Creation*

*Build My Life*

*Restoration*

Worship Prayer -Pastor Andrew

## **Generational Bridge: -Pastor David**

### **Message: “Soaring without Seeing” -Pastor David**

Tony Evans in *The Promise: Experiencing God’s Greatest Gift the Holy Spirit* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, page 173) tells a story about an eagle that was raised by turkeys. Somehow an eagle’s egg was knocked out of its nest and landed on a turkey farm. When the little eaglet broke out of his shell, he looked around and saw a bunch of turkeys and assumed, of course, that he must be a turkey. He began to eat like a turkey, walk like a turkey, gobble like a turkey, and even smell like a turkey. Occasionally, when he would gaze at his reflection in the water or stretch his wings, he would wonder about who he really was, but the daily grind of life on a turkey farm kept him locked in his turkey identity.

One day a majestic eagle flew over the farm. Seeing the eaglet among the turkeys below, the eagle swooped down and asked, “Hey, what are you doing there?”

“I’m hanging out with my family, the turkeys,” the eaglet replied.

“Who told you that you were a turkey?” asked the eagle.

“Well,” said the eaglet, “I was born with turkeys and raised by turkeys. I walk, eat, gobble, and smell like a turkey; so, I must be one of them.”

“Someone has lied to you,” said the eagle. “Stretch out those wings! Now flap!”

Obediently, the eaglet did as he was told. And as he did so, he began to rise above the farmyard. Flapping harder, and harder, higher and higher. “Now follow me,” shouted the eagle.

As the eagles begin to soar into the sky, one of the turkeys looked up and said, “Where do you think you’re going?”

“The eaglet look back over his shoulder and said, “I’m going to be what I was created to be, you turkey!”

A common story narrative, for sure, but I thought at least Armando and James would appreciate that ending...I know that at least *they* would chuckle!

But as trite as this story is, it does carry powerful truth!

Armando and James, you’ve had a most strange senior year experience this year. Yours is the graduating class of COVID-19. No prom, no end of the year celebrations, no spring activities, no gatherings. You had drive through graduation! Strange year. But, of course, your accomplishment is far greater than the last three months. It’s been the last 12 years! And we still want you to know that we are proud of you, that we celebrate you, and that we pray God’s blessings on you.

And, I hope you’re still being told—in cards and greetings, and in all sorts of ways—to go and soar, to fly, to go boldly into your future, facing it unafraid.

As your church family, it has been our primary desire to not only love you, support you, show you Jesus, but also to do all within our power to help shape you as a disciple of Jesus. Our role for you has been being the soaring eagle overhead, calling you to your true identity.

Our reality is that we are a bit more like the eaglet than we may first think. God did create each one of us, making us in His image, creating us for a life and purpose that can only be fulfilled when we live who we are created to be.

But we grow up in a world that is a bit more like a turkey farm than we also may first think! Your cultural environment has been confused, and confusing. It points us to be selfish, to put ourselves first, to focus on what we want, what we desire, to validate what we think, and affirm whatever we want to believe. Our farmyard environment may teach us to try to be nice, but how things work is that we need to position ourselves to get the best, to grasp what we want, to leverage

our resources to bend things to our way. We learn to use people and love things. We idolize ourselves at the expense of others. We are taught to be good people, but good people who have good things, who get to go to good places, to have good (self-serving) relationships, and the good life is having it all. This is the gobbledegook of the barnyard. Big tom turkeys strutting their stuff, puffed up, showing off, trying to impress others, and other toms trying to compete, vying for the spotlight and seeking attention. The life this world teaches is a turkey race!

So, although you were created to be a child of God and to soar in His good plan for your life, it's so hard to remember this, since you were born with turkeys, raised among turkeys—not I'm not talking about your family here, but the wider culture!—we've learned to eat, walk, gobble and smell like turkeys, and so we naturally default into thinking we must be one of them. We must behave like them. We must do what they do. We must live like they have taught us. And yet, there is that inner feeling that we were made for something more. We don't really fit in. We seem odd, look a bit different. Something tells us that this is not who we are. When we stop to look deeply at our image, we see an image of God there.

As a church, we pledge to make disciples! We are people who once believed we were turkeys, and who have become aware that are children of God. So, we strive to live our God-given identity. We desire to soar as God gives wind beneath our wings. And we, in turn, come around you and call you to who you really are. Our question to you has been, "Hey, what are you doing there?" "Who told you that you were a turkey?" Don't believe the lie. Take a good look at yourself. You are a child of God!

So, as you graduate from high school and start a new adventure, soaring into a new chapter of your life, I want, once again, for us, your church family, to call you upwards.

One: turkeys keep their eyes on the ground. They scurry around all day looking for something that tastes good, that merely satisfies their immediate want. They have wings, and they *can* fly, but they are so ground-focused that they rarely even try. I want to tell you again, and again, that God created you for a purpose and a reason. And that reason is not to scrape around on the ground just looking for something to nibble on. Lift your eyes up and look at Jesus, who calls you to a life of adventure and meaning and significance. He has a plan for your life that only you can do. And that plan is not what the turkeys want for you! Look to Jesus, because you have been made in His image, and only by looking to Him will you see who you really are!

Hebrews 12:1-2 says, "So then, with endurance, let's also press on [press up!] in the race laid out in front of us, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. Let's throw off any extra baggage [wrong ideas about who we are, or what we were made for], get rid of the sin that trips us up [put away our selfish way of operating], and *fix our eyes on* Jesus, the creator and the completer of our faith."

Two: Flap your wings harder and harder, higher and higher. No, you don't want your life to be all about striving after selfish things, but God your creator does call you to be all that He has made you to be. And that won't happen if you hang around on the ground, doing what everyone else does. You've got to put in all your effort, all your commitment, all your resolution, and create for yourself healthy, holy habits so that you can soar as you were intended. It won't be easy. And you have to live out your God-identity day after day, month after month, year after year. Flying isn't easy. It takes practice. It takes effort. It takes setting your self will. We, your church, have been calling you to fly all these years. And you will need to stay close to others, in a local church, who will keep urging you to fly harder and harder, higher and higher. Without that community of flyers, the call of the ground becomes too tempting, too easy. Jesus followers put the way of the world behind, take up the calling of self-denial, and live their lives in the sky!

Paul tells the Christians in Philippi, chapter 2:12-13, “Therefore, Jesus-followers, just as you always obey me, not just when I am present [that’s been your life up to now, living in the grooming of your parents] but now even more while I am away [this will be your reality going forward, you choosing what you will do, even when no one is there to make you], work out your own salvation [your life with God, your soaring into the sky] with fear and trembling [it take intentional effort, a somber resolve]. God is the one who makes you able [He is the wind beneath your wings] both to want and to actually live out His good purposes.”

One more point: navigate by what you can’t see. Eagles, when they aren’t hunting, don’t fly in a straight line. They fly by how the wind currents swell. They use the wind, which we can’t see—rising, blowing, falling—to make their journeys. They fly by the wind, and you, graduates, need to fly by the lifting and guiding of the Holy Wind, the Holy Spirit. We are Pentecost people!

Isaiah 40:31 says, “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength; they will fly up on wings like eagles....”

Eagles fly vast distances, and they have an inner sense of direction. They can leave, fly a hundred miles, and still get to where they want to go. No, if you are like most teenagers, you can’t get out of town without your GPS app on your phone! You need step by step instructions: turn right at the next intersection, get into the left lane, go a quarter of a mile, scratch the dirt, look for bugs, gobble at your neighbor, keep your eyes down. Don’t let the daily grind of life out in the world keep you locked into a turkey identity.

As God’s children, you soar on wings like eagles. And you are able to fly vast distances, you can accomplish amazing things! But you are guided not just by what you see, but by the greater reality of what you cannot see.

One of our church’s gifts to you today is a compass. As you know, a compass uses the invisible magnetic pull of the North Pole to always point to north. People, before GPSs, used compasses to guide their way. And, I might add, there are times your GPS will fail you...so it is good we’re giving you an old-fashioned compass...it will always help you find your way!

As you go out to live your own lives, remember that you need to keep going in the right direction. At times, other eagles will help guide your way. But there will be so many times when you find yourself alone. You won’t be able to see your way forward. There will be times you feel lost, or find yourself in the wrong crowd—flock—far away from home. But like the eagle, you have in inner compass to direct you. The same Holy Spirit that lifts your wings, also will be that inner navigator who points out the right way. The cool thing about a compass—and this makes it better than a GPS—is that you don’t need to know where you are to know where to go! Even if you’re lost, the compass will still point you in the right direction! If you do not know the right thing to do, or what decision to make, stop and pray. Ask God’s counsel. His inner Spirit will guide you. Be sure to keep reading the Bible, for that is how you know God’s voice from all other inner voices. And the Holy Spirit uses the Bible to speak to us, and I’ve come to notice that it is the usual way the Holy Spirit speaks to us. He will tell you when you are going the wrong way—you’ll have that inner feeling that something’s wrong. He will show you the next right thing—you’ll have that sense of peace about it. He’ll take you into what you don’t like, or maybe wouldn’t choose for yourself, the steep, difficult path—you’ll feel that calling to self-sacrifice, to face into the difficulty.

Make Psalm 43:3 your daily prayer, each day when you get ready to fly: O God, “Give me your lantern and compass, give me a map, [show me the way to go today] So I can find my way to the sacred mountain, to the place of your presence.” What is that compass, that light, that map, that God gives you? It is the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. It is the Bible, the words of life. It is prayer that keeps you in conversation with God. It is Christian fellowship, flying with other eagles. It is doing good for others in a world focused on itself.

So, today we bless you as you flap your wings and take flight. We call out to you, scratching as you are on the ground, “What are you doing down there! You are made for more than this! You are God’s child. Lift your eyes off the ground and look into the sky.”

Your church—today, and all through your life—calls you to “Spread your wings! Flap, harder, harder, higher, higher!” Choose to live differently, to be different. Work out your daily life to not simply conform to the world’s patterns. Be a committed Jesus-follower. Develop healthy holy habits to fly harder and higher.

And we bless you with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, so you can soar—fly by what you do not see: to lift your wings, to lift you up, to strengthen you and embolden you; to guide you with that inner sense of God’s good way. We pray that God would be your light, your compass, your map, so you can find your way staying close to God’s presence.

And as you soar in the years ahead, and you hear the call from the ground, “Hey, where do you think you’re going?” It may come from your so-called friends, or from worldly wisdom, or from some other voice. Always keep your response the same, “I’m going to be what I was created to be.” And, rather than calling them a turkey, perhaps you could say to them, “Hey what are you doing down there? Don’t you know that you were created for something more? Come, fly with me!”

Amen.

**Grow Moment:** Praying for our graduates.

Introduction of the Graduates:

Armando Lorenzi - Perhaps computer security. Anoka Technical College, Anoka.

James Richter - Going into the trades (electrical or laborer), perhaps Dunwoody College of Technology, Minneapolis.

Presentation of Quilts: UMW

Your major gift from your church is a hand-made quilt for you to take with you. We pray it reminds you that you are always wrapped in of the love and care of Jesus and by us your home church who loves you. It’s a hand-made work of art, just like you are!

Presentation of Books: Cassi

Prayer of Blessing

We want to pray over you as our best blessing and gift to you.

When you publically confirmed your faith here at Forest Hills 3 years ago, your special Confirmation verse was Ephesians 4:23-24, “Let the Spirit renew your mind and make you into a new person, for you were created in God’s image in true righteousness and holiness.”

Let’s pray ....

Announcement

Blessings! You may all return to your seats.

We want you to know that we are doing a reception for you here today: cupcakes!

**Holy Communion**

Prayer of Confession [*Silent prayer.*]

Words of Assurance

Words of Institution

The Great Thanksgiving

Prayer of the Holy Spirit

Partaking of the Elements

Offering - Drop box available as you leave

**Closing Song:** *God Will Take Care of You* -Sanctify

**Announcements:** -Pastor David

June 14: Outdoor worship (bring lawn chairs!)

Confirmation Sunday, with treats!

Aimire Lloyd

Jacqueline Wyne

Katelyn Bautch

Noah Bonsell

Tony Lloyd

**Memory Verse** -Pastor David

“Give me your lantern and compass, give me a map, So I can find my way to the sacred mountain, to the place of your presence” -Psalm 43:3

**Benediction** -Pastor David

**Closing Music** -Pastor Andrew

*Cupcakes available as people leave.*