

St. John's Graduation
Pastor Arndt
Isaiah 41: 8 – 10

**8 “But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
you descendants of Abraham my friend,
9 I took you from the ends of the earth,
from its farthest corners I called you.
I said, ‘You are my servant’;
I have chosen you and have not rejected you.
10 So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, Faculty and Students of St. John's.

I present to you the graduating class of 2021 with the theme that I have chosen for them, “*Hear Comes Trouble*”.

Trouble was the reason you began your educational career so many years ago. When you were young you had trouble with most everything. When you were three years old someone asked you *how old you were*. You held up two fingers and said, “*I’m four*”. To help you with your troubles, your *parents* became your first teachers.

In time your parents came to the realization that helping you through your troubles was going to be a full-time job. So, they got help. They brought you to school and enlisted the help of teachers- strangers who were not your parents, but nevertheless treated you as their own children.

Parents, teachers, and pastors worked together as a unified force to help you through your troubles. But even here there was that word again... trouble.

In Kindergarten your teacher had two hands. Each day at recess she used her two hands to tie the shoelaces on all ten of your feet. She was hopelessly outnumbered. All your teachers struggled with this. What's more, as your class sizes got bigger, your needs became more diverse and unique. There were never enough hands! Trouble!

Teachers see everything, right? Of course, that's not true. Despite their best efforts, there were times when your teachers didn't see your struggles or when you needed help. Sometimes they saw you with less than 20/20 vision and didn't understand what they were seeing in you. There were many times that we looked at the outward things, not understanding what was in your heart. Trouble!

Finally, “*to teach*” is a transitive verb. That means that it requires a teacher who “*gives*”, and a student who “*receives*”. Both must do their job well for teaching to take place. Each year, as students, you prayed for teachers that were lively, engaging, and fun. You know what? Your teachers prayed for the same in you.

You wanted teachers who were “cool”. Your teachers wanted students who were “cool”. Each year, both you and your teachers were at least a little disappointed. Trouble!

These troubles brought us to the realization that we need help. We need stronger hands and more of them. We need eyes that see all things and see them for what they really are. We need good teachers and good students who consistently teach well and learn well. This is the reason that your education at St. John’s has always been centered on the truth and promises of God.

God promises you, “**I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.**” God knows how to tie your shoes. He also knows how to untie the impossible knots that you will create for yourself in High School. When you are at your weakest, He will strengthen you. You stand on God’s righteousness, not your own.

God promises, “**So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God**”. At first thought, it’s not very comforting to hear that God will ALWAYS be with you. It embarrasses us to think of the things that God has heard us say and watched us do. Yet, God says, “Do not be dismayed”. At St. John’s you’ve learned something precious about God. He uses his divine powers in remarkable ways. Most notably, he sent his Son to die for you. By grace he forgives you. *This* God is always with you, so do not be dismayed.

Finally, God says, “**I have chosen you and have not rejected you.**” Teaching is a two-way street. God’s relationship with you is not. God knew about your troubles when he chose you. The very fact that you have troubles led him to have mercy on you and act with compassion. The theme for this year has been “Run to Christ”. The truth is Christ saw your troubles even before you did. When he saw your troubles, Christ ran to you.

Next year you will be in High School where your troubles will become more interesting. You will make your first High School sports team and then miss the free throw that costs your team the championship. You will learn to drive and then some of you will learn how to fill out an insurance claim. You’ll spend some days trying to be noticed and other days trying to hide. Trouble!

Remember that God does not run from you when there is trouble. God runs to you when there is trouble. Fear not, he is with you. He will uphold you. He has chosen you.

-Amen