

SERMON BY KATIE McCHESNEY

JUNE 14, 2009

Hi, for those of you who don't know me, my name is Katie McChesney and I am a senior at Millburn High School; not for long, though, I graduate a week from tomorrow. When Scott first asked me to make this sermon about a week ago, I thought he had made a mistake—surely he meant for me to do a reading, not the sermon. I mean I haven't graduated from high school yet, so I should not be qualified to write and deliver a sermon. But he meant it, and so here I am.

I don't know if there is a formula for writing a sermon, I couldn't find "How to write a sermon for dummies" at Borders. But if it's like writing an English paper you start with an introduction, write some body paragraphs, and finish it off with a conclusion. The only difference I can think of between a sermon and a paper is that a sermon has *Amen* at the end.

I guess I should start with my interpretation of today's readings. In the first reading- 1 Samuel, the Lord tells Samuel that he must anoint a king among Jesse's sons. Jesse has eight sons, but only the eldest seven are present because they are the more accomplished, but the Lord does not look at outward appearance, and demands that Samuel see the youngest son before he leaves. The youngest son, though he is dirty from standing out with the sheep all day, is the Lord's choice for king; the Lord looked past the seven, taller sons, and wanted the ruddy one, the who wasn't there.

On Friday we got our yearbooks, and I was looking through it with my mom. We paused for a second to look at the superlatives section—best smile, most attractive, most likely to succeed, although practically every Millburn student qualifies for that superlative. But really, only a handful of seniors got those titles. Maybe the 20 superlative winners are like Jesse's 7 sons. Which begs the question, Where's David? Maybe David is the quiet kid who sits behind me in Calculus, who I've never spoken to before, who has the potential that no one knows about. And just because the 380 seniors at Millburn didn't recognize this kid's potential, doesn't mean he's not really the one most likely to succeed.

2 Corinthians starts, "We are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord-- for we walk by faith, not by sight." Like the first reading where God recognizes David before he recognizes himself, here they are also talking about something that is unseen. Once again, the Bible is talking about something that is intangible and unbelievable because you just can't see it.

Back to the yearbook, one of the other things that I noticed while flipping through was that it showcased the visible. It's all about what you can see. There's a picture, and a caption, and that's it. I think about my best friends and their pictures are great, but there is so much more to know and love about them than their picture says. It's just like that with our faith—"for we walk by faith, not by sight." Sometimes, you just gotta believe.

Senior year is ending, and there is so much sad about that. I am literally counting "lasts"- my last lacrosse game, my last class, my last day of school, my lasy summer with my friends before we all go off to school. It's sad because it's the end, but it is also so exciting because I'm starting a totally new chapter in my life. The Corinthians really speaks to that when it says, "everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" I think that faith is a lot like that; we have faith that with newness,

good things will come, but that doesn't mean it isn't hard to say goodbye to the old. It's not supposed to be easy to say goodbye, that's the essence of faith, that even though it's hard, you know that in the end, it will all be worth it.

And then, the gospel. Jesus's famous mustard seed parable. This is actually my favorite gospel reading because I think the image that it suggests is just so perfectly suited to our beliefs. Here we have this teeny tiny, seemingly insignificant mustard seed. But when it grows, boy does it grow. A simple google image search shows this wonder. There's this seed, and next to it is this huge tree that it becomes. And Jesus says that this mustard seed is like the "kingdom of God." That's quite a stretch, from a teeny seed to the most powerful force in the world. For me, when I think about this reading, faith is like a mustard seed. This faith, planted the right way, and nurtured correctly, can grow into this wonderful thing, this kingdom of god, for an individual who, because of faith, can do the unimaginable.

I'm going to share what I consider an example of this mustard seed principle in today's world. When we first moved here from Texas in 2000, my family was looking for a strong community that we could take part in. My aunt, uncle, and cousins were members of Christ Church and invited us to come to a service- probably Easter or Christmas, and from that point on we became members of this church. But once my mom became a Sunday school teacher and then decided to run the Heifer Project, we actually became active members of the church. We grew as members, just like that mustard seed, and now, my mom, despite working a full-time job and raising two teenagers, is Senior Warden of the Vestry. My dad deserves a lot more credit than we give him; he is at home, holding down the fort every night while my mom is at her unending Vestry meetings. And my brother, along with acolyting on Sundays, boasts that he has the best attendance in YPF this year and is excited to go to New Orleans in a week for his first mission trip. And me? Well I'm standing up here delivering a sermon this morning. So I think it is safe to say that my family has grown into quite a mustard tree.

I could probably just make this speech about all the great things that this church has done for me in recent memories. I started out in Sunday School, wearing my Soccer jersey to church more often than not. I was in multiple pageants, I got to be an angel and then I was Gabriel. I've acolyted, many times, and managed not to burn the church down, my mom is so proud. I was Confirmed, and have spent many Sunday nights in Parish Hall with YPF. I've gone on three Mission Trips, and had wonderful experiences on all three. For me, the Church has given me so many great opportunities; "It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." The Church provides so many opportunities, and I truly believe that I am a better person for taking advantage of each one.

I've spent a fair portion of the last month worrying about my future. I'm off to Colgate in approximately 2 months, and honestly I can't wrap my mind around the fact that I am leaving so soon. And this week's readings spoke directly to my insecurities. I'm going to have to say goodbye to my friends, put my yearbook on my bookshelf and be sad that this chapter of my life is over. But at the same time, I have to take every experience, and every mistake, that I have made along the way, and remember that everything will work out in the end, that God sees my true potential and one day I will recognize it. I am scared to be four and a half hours away from home next year, but I am also taking with me invaluable lessons that Christ Church has taught me, and with these lessons, I will be able to succeed. We all take a leap of faith when we do something new, the trick is to understand that it's just that—a leap of faith. Maybe we're all just little mustard seeds. AMEN