

"Tis The Season To Be?"

May 31, 2004

No, I haven't lost my mind. I'm not talking about Christmas but here, in Wellesley, 'tis the season to ... graduate." Besides the high school graduation, we have three colleges that have annual graduations this time of the year - Wellesley College, Babson College and Massachusetts Bay Community College. So, needless to say, there is a lot of celebrating and a lot of speech making going on in town.

If you have ever attended a graduation (and who hasn't?), you know there is always a "commencement" speech.

Commencement comes from the Latin word for "begin" so commencement speeches inevitably have the theme of "entering into adulthood" or "beginning a new life". There are usually challenges to leave the generally irresponsible college life behind and step up to a new level of maturity and/or adulthood.

I would like to think that there are several commencement speeches in the Bible. Certainly when Jesus sent out twelve disciples into the "cold, cruel world" in Matthew chapter 10, Jesus was right upfront with them. He told them to

expect persecution and that things could become quite nasty for them. Later, at the end of Matthew, Jesus gives yet another commencement speech challenging the disciples to "go into the world and make disciples ...". And in the first chapter of Acts, Jesus gives the disciples one last commencement speech - this time telling them to await the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them and then they will "be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Have you ever imagined Jesus giving a commencement speech to you? What would be in it? Would it really be much different from the "speeches" He gave to the disciples? I think not. So, how are we doing? Are we being His witnesses? Are we walking in the power of the Holy Spirit? Are we experiencing persecution - because, if you are truly being a witness, chances are that you are at least experiencing some persecution ... even if it's simply being called names (does homophobic, bigot, or narrow-minded come to mind?)

Anyway, for all of you going to a graduation ceremony in the next couple of weeks, ask yourselves this question: "Have you heard Jesus' commencement speech to you?"