

July 3, 2016 Chapel

Dustin Michel

Good morning. Let me first once again express the pride and honor I feel for being able to address you this morning. I would like to start today with excerpt from my favorite poem, Clothes of Heaven by W.B. Yeats.

*But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.*

I read you this poem because as many of you know I am a passionate person. I confess myself to be a hopeless romantic who sees poetry where others see none. This morning I plan on sharing with you a story few know and for me it is deeply personal so I ask your forgiveness in advance if my voice waives or my eyes tear.

Know that before all of you lies a great adventure full of opportunity. This summer should be one you remember for ages. Growth, gentleman, growth is what we really strive for here at camp. To grow your mind, your body and your spirit into a more complete human being. We mark these achievements with awards and commendations but rarely do we ever take a step back and look at who we were and who we will be.

Song 1 Wagon Wheel

I would like to talk today about the men you will become. This is my 6th summer here at Timanous and over that time I have gotten to know many of you and you have gotten to know me. You all share the good fortune of not knowing the 13, 14, 15 year old me.....the man you see before you today in many ways is a stark contrast to the boy I was. Where there is now passion, there was once only apathy. Reasoning was once self centered arrogance. Worst of all where there is now hope I was filled with hate. In 9th grade, I was failing several classes along with making very poor decisions about how I was spending my time and who I was spending that time with. I was lost.

It was not until one day after school, I had just opened my locker in order to change for wrestling practice. Over my shoulder a hand reached out and closed it. My coach, coach Lewis, "Michel where are you going?" To practice "Not now". He ushered me into the coach's office and told me I was academically ineligible to compete due to my grades. He asked to see my homework which was its normal sheets of barren paper. He told me to get to work then left for practice. He returned 2 hours later and checked on my progress. He nodded and said "that will due for now" after packing up my work I began to head for the door. "Michel, where are you going?" Home? I answered confused. You have practice to make up. What followed was one of the most intense and brutal hour workouts in my life. From sprints to bear crawls from push ups to up downs I carried myself through all of it. Too blinded by arrogance to understand what had got me here and too filled with anger to let him break me. After the hour was up he called me in and asked again "where are you going?"

Timanous prayer

Song 2- Forever Young. By Duluth, Minnesota's own Bob Dylan

"Where are you going?" The words kept spinning around in my head. The next day was the same, I had half hoped he would simply give up and move on after all, I was a 3rd string nobody with modest skills and poor work ethic, but he like me was stubborn to a fault. The hour closed again with him asking "where are you going?" On the third day however I entered his office with a smug smile and a arrogant wave I dropped my homework on his desk and simply said practice, I am going to practice.

That day makes a major turning point for me, my grades steadily improved and with them my performance in the practice room. I was wrestling so well that I was able to wrestle off in order to earn a spot on our varsity team for a coming Saturday tournament. That match I could do no wrong, Words could not express the joy and pride I had in myself that week. On Friday night, as I laid in bed to eager to sleep, a carload of my friends who I had not talked to in weeks ran a stoplight and crashed into another vehicle. Luckily no one in either car was injured. It was discovered however that all of my friends had been drinking. I never saw two of them again as they were moved to other schools. I still wonder even as I stand here before you today, if it weren't for the caring actions of one man, would I have been in that car that night?.

Since the events of this story I raised my GPA from a 2.0 to a 3.2. I have graduated college twice, the second time summa cum laude. I now work in the same school I attended and call coach Lewis and other teachers (some of which had failed me in the past) my peers.

If you get nothing from this story and zoned out minutes ago than hear this. To the younger campers, I say work hard and know that many times the person pushing you the hardest cares about you the most. To the older campers, I say make smart choices and if you find yourself disappointed by the man you are becoming, know that it is never too late to change. Do not try and be someone else for that is impossible. Simply be the best man you that you can be. Finally to the men in green, never never doubt the impact you can have on someone's life if you care enough to act.

Song 3-Wooded path

Look to this Day Look to this day For it is life, the very life of life.
In its brief course lie all the verities and realities of your existence:
The bliss of growth; the glory of action; the splendor of beauty.
For yesterday is already a dream and tomorrow is only a vision.
But every today well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well therefore to this day!
Such is the salutation of the dawn!