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Class of 2021, I want you to soak in this moment. I want this night to be forever burned into your memory, because you are on the precipice of greatness.

This, my friends, is a seminal moment—a defining time in your life. Not just because you are celebrating the degree you worked so hard for, but because you have a choice to make tonight. A choice whether you will live a life of greatness.

See, my role on this stage is NOT to give you advice on how to be successful. Because frankly, none of us have figured life out. But I will share one thing I know to be true—the one thing I want you take away from tonight—and that is what it takes to live a life of greatness.

By greatness, I don't mean fame or fortune. While that may be the destiny for some of you, those things should not be your aim. By greatness, I mean fulfilling the purpose that you were uniquely created for.

See, I believe God created each of us for a purpose and life's great adventure is to discover and grow into that purpose. To follow your soul's path into the mist of the unknown future—to go where you can't see what lies ahead, yet to still walk forth boldly toward the calling meant uniquely for you.

And when you discover your purpose, it bursts forth like the fierce sun burning away the morning fog—burning away all the noise, the clutter, the emptiness of an ordinary life. When you decide to walk this purpose path, you will live a life that shines brightly to all those around you and you will change the world, even if that is the world of one person.

Most people wait too long to follow their destiny and others never do. But hope is that you make the choice tonight and join the changemakers of this world.

But know this too... living a life of purpose is not always a glorious journey. It is not for the faint of heart nor for those looking for the highs of more money, more promotions, more power, more things, more, more, more. This life of purpose is a beautiful and messy one—full of transformative experiences, discoveries, pain, joy, and becomings.

As you follow your purpose, you will fail. We all fail and let no one have you think otherwise. But in the words of Theodore Roosevelt, he says:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

And why I am talking about failure on such a special night? Because I have failed. I have failed hard. And you will fail. But those failures do NOT define you. And I want you to know that in those moments of failure—when you are face down in the arena—if you have the anchor of purpose, you will find the courage to be both disappointed and brave. You will find the strength to rise and try again.

Know this also... As you follow your purpose, you will succeed and experience overwhelming joy. When those moments come, I hope you remember they are the result of not just of your own doing, but because people have loved you, lifted you, and given you the chance to shine brightly. Remember that, so you too can give others that chance to shine brightly. They need your light and encouragement and sharing it will take nothing away from your own brilliance.

So, how does any of this relate to tonight? Well, all these experiences—the failures and successes—speak to one thing, our ability to harness our unique energy and gifts into force for good, despite what life brings our way. This is what purpose does.

In the words of Glennon Doyle, she says: “Each of us was born to bring forth something that has never existed... We are here to fully introduce ourselves, to impose ourselves and ideas and thoughts and dreams onto the world, leaving it changed forever by who we are and what we bring forth from our depths.” This is purpose.

You see, my friends, greatness is not solely measured by what you do or achieve, but who you become and touch along the way. It’s about learning from your experiences and using that wisdom and love to help others. Because we have one, beautiful life. And the people who live with purpose are the ones who live an extraordinary life—a life of deep fulfillment.

So, tonight is a seminal moment. You have a choice to make when you walk out of the doors of this auditorium. A choice of whether or not you will live a life of purpose—a life of greatness.

Feel this moment deeply. Feel it on your skin—the energy of the room, the feeling of the regalia as it rests on your body and asks you to make a choice. Feel this moment in your lungs—the beautiful weight of this day and the strength of life within you, as it asks you to make a choice. Feel this moment in your heart—the invigorating beat of reaching this

milestone and knowing not what lies ahead, but something is calling to you. And feel this moment in your bones—knowing you have a choice of leading an ordinary life or an extraordinary one. You know the answer in your bones.

Feel it deeply, my friends. You were made for greatness. I hope you live it.

Congratulations!