It is obvious that all commencement days in the current decade of the twentieth century must be filled with a profound sense of crisis and decision. Great events have come upon us. It is possible that even greater ones are in the making. As we look back upon the course of the twentieth century until this moment, it is comparatively easy to give way to disillusionment and despair. Do we remember clearly what men were thinking and saying at the beginning of the present century? This was to be the greatest era in the history of humanity! Man had finally conquered the forces of nature and compelled them to serve his material needs. A world of peace and plenty stretched limitless and fair before him. The twentieth century was to see the fulfillment of all his ancient dreams of plenty and peace and happiness.

Today this great century is stumbling toward the half-way mark. Four decades have already passed. We have had one decade of comparative peace and prosperity, one decade of war, one decade of mad materialism,
and one decade of awful collapse. Now the wheel has come full turn and we are face to face with the greatest war in the history of the world. All the glowing dreams of man for the present century lie in dust and ashes.

It is obvious that against such a background a baccalaureate sermon is in greater danger than ever before of becoming merely a fossilized remnant of an outworn tradition or the repetition of a few platitudes which sound like a hollow voice from an exhausted well. After all, what can one say to those upon whom the ends of the world have come? Why should they listen to us who have built the world of the 1940's? Many of us have talked about love and hated those nearest to us. Others have talked about brotherhood and have ruthlessly shouldered their fellowmen out of their paths to success. Still others have talked about justice and equality, but not when their pocketbooks were touched or when they involved men whose skin is black. The older generation has little right to speak in these dark and anxious days. Actions have spoken louder than words. Our deeds have made our words ridiculous.

It is still true, however, that we are the only living link between what has been and what shall be. It is possible that by the grace of God the younger generation may draw from our failure a few lessons which, if they become real in your minds and vivid in your hearts, will enable you to build better than we have built; to live again, please God, under far visions and lifting skies, and to make our bitter experiences an arch where through gleams your untraveled world whose margin is bright with the mercy of God.

-The dark background of the modern world is the reason for our text. More than three thousand years ago an old man stood alone on the
summit of Mount Nebo. Before his old and weary eyes lay the land of promise, spread out beautiful and fair before him. For that land he had waited and worked these many years. All his life he had given for it! The waiting and the wars, the flaming heat of the desert and the freezing cold of the nights, all the fightings and fears had been for this. As he stood there at the end of his dreams and near to his ultimate achievement, a voice came to him from the long silences of eternity, "I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." The sound of the voice died away into the world from which it came, and Moses learned one of the greatest and hardest lessons in life. It is one that is bitterly needed in our day of cynicism, defeat and despair. It is one which you should remember all the days and years of your life. When all is said and done, life is to be measured not in terms of its achievement but of its quest. The standards of its greatness and power are not in what you find, but in what you seek. Great failure is better than cheap success. Achievement is in the hands of God. Ours is the quest, "I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither."

It has become customary in our cheap and materialistic day to emphasize success and achievement. Graduates are sent out into the world with the wish that they might reach a goal. They must achieve something, no matter how low and cheap the achievement may be! The result has been that we have too often compromised, chiseled, and cut corners in order to achieve a goal. We have succumbed to the slow, dry rot of the immediate, the attainable, the practical. We have been satisfied with the achievement of little things. As I look back upon successive generations of graduates during the past twenty years, I discover that their great trouble has not been that they have been failures, but that
they have been cheap successes. They have lowered their sights! They have given up the good fight! They have lost the vision and the dream!

Our text suggests that exactly the opposite and only the opposite view of life will enable you to make any contribution to the world of today and tomorrow, to live as God would have you live, to be as happy as you can be in an unhappy world. Somewhere we must find again a few men and women who by the grace and power of God will submit to the hard discipline of the unattainable, who will drink the hardy wine of sacrifice, who will find a creed for their souls and a fire for their hearts which will give them the power to surrender their lives on altars greater than men can build.

Fifteen hundred years after Moses this view of life came to fulfillment in the cross. There the eternal Son of God, by the power of His atonement, made it possible for us to see life as it is and as it should be. In the cross itself we have the greatest example of an achievement which is far beyond the measurable achievements of man. As the sun went down on Good Friday and the three crosses stood gaunt and bare against the evening sky, almost everyone in Jerusalem felt that the life which had ended on that day had been a failure. He was dead. His enemies had been victorious. He had achieved nothing. We know today, however, that on the third day he rose again. Forty days later He ascended to the throne of majesty on high. Out of failure before the eyes of man achievement in the eyes of God had been born. His quest for the souls of men had ended.

It is true, of course, that our Lord's life and death is a unique historical event. It is true also, however, that within the limitations of our own life its application to our thinking is very clear. He came to do the will of God. By His power we, too, are called to do the will of God on earth as it is done in Heaven. We are not to measure
life in terms of its achievement, but solely and alone in terms of its quest for the ends and purposes which God sets before us.

I am certain that as children of the twentieth century some of us are now ready to say that this view of life is impractical. We must be realistic! We must take our place in the ruthless competition with the modern world! We must be successful! This has been our view of life for the past forty or fifty years. Has it been practical? Has it worked out well? Are we happy about it? I wonder! Ask any one to whom the years have brought wisdom and understanding and he will tell you that men come to honor and peace not for the victories they have won, but for the battles they have fought. All history is a witness to this fact. Who have been the great men and women even if we measure them by valid human standards? Have they not been those who perhaps lost more battles than they won, who clung to their faith and ideals and hopes, no matter how far and high they were? This view of life is not quite so impractical as our stupidly practical civilization has led us to believe. All great things in the world have been done by men and women who lived for an end beyond life, and the greatest things in the world have been done by men and women who lived for God.

More than that! We are driven to this view of life by the situation in which we find ourselves today. What is wrong with us goes so deep that no single generation will be able to right it. The very core of life has become soft. We hear much about the forces of barbarism arrayed against us. We hear much about the alleged barbarism behind us in the dim history of the race. We have, however, heard too little about the barbarism within us. This has brought us low. We have succumbed to the soft, rotten barbarism of sin and forgetfulness of God. We are face
to face with its results. To remove that barbarism from modern life will be a long and hard task. It can be done only through the redeeming message of the cross of Christ.

This will be your great work as you go out into the modern world. One thing I fear more than any other. Because your task will be so overwhelmingly great and, humanly speaking, almost impossible of achievement, you may not begin at all! You may not embark on the quest. You may wash your hands of it all. You may sit back in the little corners of life and let the world rock on its mad way to destruction. If the tragedy of our generation was our blindness, the tragedy of yours may well be disillusionment.

II

Here is where God enters. He speaks to you today: "I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." He alone can finally give the vision, the dream, the hope, the courage, the faith which you will need so bitterly in the days that lie before you. His is the ultimate power which will enable you to see life as a quest rather than an achievement. You will not be able to live as He would have you live except by the power of your redemption from sin and your peace with God. As you make your choice between quest and achievement you must remember all the saints and martyrs who have gone before you, the long and magnificent line of men and women who have gone to immortality by placing their mortality at the feet of Him who rules the world and holds the sceptre of the universe. No matter how dark and stormy the days before you, you can have God and Christ! You can hear his indomitable voice above the black sweep of time and history, "Fear not, I
These great truths must first of all be applied directly and personally to our own lives. We cannot solve the problems of the world without first solving the problems of our own life. Living for God and in God you will remember certain truths which the modern world has forgotten. Seeing life in terms of quest rather than of achievement, you will cling to the eternal guideposts by which God has marked our journey through the world.

There is the guidepost of truth! Every question and problem in life must be considered from the point of view of truth. Our first question must be, "Is something true?" Not, "Does it work?" Not, "Will it bring success?" Much of modern life and thought is built on lies. It will therefore be necessary for you to cling to truth with a desperate respect which will enable you to stand aside from the conspiracy of lying.

There is the guidepost of justice! Our view of justice must be rooted in the justice of God and the eternal dignity and faith of the individual human soul. For the individual the eternal Son of God came to the cross. The individual is at the heart and center of God's plan for the world. We must therefore not succumb to the modern emphasis on the mass. If you are to make any contribution to the world of tomorrow you must think in terms of justice, freedom and equality for the individual.

There is the guidepost of mercy! In a day of tyranny and power the quality of mercy lies hidden in the corners of life. More tragic than that, its quiet relentless power is also forgotten. If you are to be of any value to society in the years to come you must remember that there is a silent, overwhelming power in mercy which finally breaks the chains of men's pride and turns the feet of men to God. In a world which worships power and force you are called to be the representatives of mercy.
We who remain here are now ready to send you out into a dark world. We shall wait for your return. It will not mean much, however, if you come back with success in your hands. We shall not be concerned over your achievements. We shall, however, be happy if you come back with scars in your hands and a light in your eyes and the dust of battle on your soul. Let no man disturb your life in God! Let nothing and nobody dim your vision of life as quest rather than achievement! He shall cause you to see it with your eyes -- and one day, late or soon, you shall go over!