

Start time: 3:20

Drew:

Thank you

What an honor it is to be here. Thank you to Father Wildes, distinguished faculty, esteemed trustees and guests, and of course the 2010 graduating class here at Loyola University. I'll be honest, I was a little about using distinguished and esteemed in the same sentence, because I thought it would come out extinguished, and that is not the description I wanted to use. Certainly you are all distinguished and esteemed, and it is an honor to be here.

You know we have a lot in common. Most of us came to New Orleans around the same time - the spring or summer of 2006, when that was not the most popular thing to do. For me I felt like coming to New Orleans was a calling, and for you there must have been something drawing you as well. A much stronger force that we can't necessarily describe other than that we know that we belonged here, and now four years later we can reflect back and say we were a part of something special, and certainly the work is not done yet, but we were a part of something special. We have all watched this city not just come back, but come back stronger than ever. We have seen the people come back with more passion and determination than ever before. - And we've all been part of the super bowl championship. (cheers) Definitely couldn't have left that one out.

No matter where you're from or where you go from here, keep New Orleans close to your heart, and remember what you were a part of, and know that now we are all linked together forever. (cheers)

As I look out at the young men and women graduates of Loyola University class of 2010, I am so excited for you all. What you are about to experience will be eye-opening, certainly rewarding, challenging at times. You know they say experience is what you gain when you don't get what you want. I can promise you that over the next few years you will gain experience. You will not always get what you want. You will face adversity, but know that the sky is the limit as to what you can all accomplish.

There are some of you that will be doctors, lawyers, politicians (laughs), writers, artists, teachers, coaches, entrepreneurs, inventors, and maybe one of you will even own an NFL franchise someday. I know another Loyola University member who does, and that's Mr. Tom Benson. But I can tell you this, your best years are yet to come, but does not mean it is going to be easy. In fact I can guarantee that you will face adversity along the way and for most of you it will be the toughest thing you've ever had to face in your life. But I'll also tell you that ever successful person you meet or talk to will say that it is because of that adversity that they were given the opportunity to reach new heights they never thought possible.

For me it was my shoulder injury back in 2005, December 31, 2005. I was playing for the San Diego Chargers. I dislocated my right shoulder going into a season or an off-season in which I did not have a contract. I did not have a job, and when you have that kind of injury as a quarterback there is not that many people that come calling or knocking. So at the time I thought, this is probably the worst thing that could have ever happened to me. But now I look back at it, four years later and I say it was probably one

of the best things that ever happened to me. (cheers) Because it brought me to New Orleans.

There are many others that have faced that adversity, that have been in similar circumstances or situations. I will give you some examples. Steve Jobs, you might know him, CEO of Apple. He was adopted, as a young baby. He went to college and dropped out after his first year. He ended up then inventing or starting Apple along with a partner of his when he was 20 years old in his basement. But then by age 30, he was fired from his position as CEO, when he had a falling out with his partner and with the board at Apple. For the next few years, there was some soul searching for him, but in the end he ended up starting another company, you might have heard of it, Pixar Animation, which ended up getting bought by Disney for almost \$8 billion. And then another company that Apple ended up buying a few years later for \$500 million, and then he was right back where he was years before, 20 years before, as the CEO. And there he is today doing some absolutely remarkable things, but what he would say, what I've heard him say, is that it was that adversity he faced, when he was 'kicked to the curb' so to speak, from the company that he founded, where he really gained strength and yet more motivation to go forth and do more remarkable things. Things that he would have been able to accomplish had he not gone through what he went through at age 30.

Another example, Ellen Degeneres. We all know Ellen, she used to grow up right down the road. She used to go to Saints games at halftime at the old Tulane stadium. I've heard Ellen talk about, the moment she came out and announced that she was gay. At that point she was having a fairly successful career. (cheers for the slip). She was having a successful career. Once she announced that, for three years she was out of work. People would not give her the opportunities they would have had before. To her that was the toughest thing she ever had to go through, but in the end she was being true to herself. She then received a small opportunity, to perhaps own her own TV show, her own talk show. And I think we all know how that's going. She is perhaps one of the most if not the most successful talk show hosts in history. And certainly by being a New Orleanian, we love her to death, we know what she meant to this community, not only to our community but to the country and to the world. She is a source of inspiration and someone who would sit her and tell you had she not gone through what she went through during those three years, that she would not be where she is today.

So once again the lesson being that adversity is an opportunity. Adversity will make you stronger. Adversity will mold you into the person that you are meant to be. You all probably remember the onside kick in the super bowl right? (cheers). How could we forget that. I'll tell you the story behind that. You know we had two weeks to prepare for the super bowl. I remember Sean Peyton came into the meeting at the beginning of that two week preparation for the super bowl and said that 'we have an onside kick that we're putting into the plan. And it's not a matter of if we are going to run it, it's a matter of when we are going to run it. It's going to happen' And sure enough, it did. And it worked. Thank God. (laughs) So the lesson there, it's not a matter of if you will face adversity in your laugh, it's a matter of when, when adversity knocks at your door, seize it as an opportunity. For that adversity is being put in your life for a reason. It is God's way of providing with the strength and the tools to face future challenges, and to mold you into the person he meant for you to be. In the end it is this adversity that will allow

you to accomplish things in life that you originally that were reserved only for your dreams.

My second piece of advise, is to find out what you love to do and figure out a way to get paid for it. Sounds pretty simple doesn't it? Find out what you love to do and then figure out a way to get paid for it. Some of you out there think you know exactly what you want to do. And then there is others who probably have no idea. And I can tell you this, that's ok, because in a year from now, those that think they know exactly what they want to do, they might not have any idea at that point. And those that don't know what to do, you might have found your passion by then. But my point is be patient and don't settle. The only way to do great work is to love what you do. And as with every matter of the heart, you will know when you find it.

My third piece of advise is to approach every opportunity with an attitude of gratitude and a mindset of whatever you encounter you will leave it better than when you arrived. We have all been a part of that, here in New Orleans. But why stop here? In everything you do in life, leave your mark. Leave your mark. Be a great steward to the community and to society and to whatever business you are involved. And understand that part of your purpose in life is to leave whatever you touch better than when you found it. So leave your mark. And leave it better than when you found it.

Number four, life goes fast. I was sitting in your seats ten years ago. Now it's hard to think that that was ten years ago, because it feels like it was yesterday. And I guess my point there is don't forget to enjoy the moment, and reflect back on the journey from time to time. For me, standing on that podium, after we won the super bowl, was a moment, one of *the* defining moments of my life. What made it even more special was the fact that I was holding my son, and the reflection on everything that we had been through, as a city, as a team, to get to that point. And as we watched the confetti come down, world champions come across the jumbotron, and looking out at the Who Dat Nation just going crazy. Beads flying everywhere. We recognized what a journey that had been. And how special that was, and there's no city, no organization, no group of people that deserved it more. I promise you that. (cheers) But the journey is not over. We want another one.

Also don't forget to enjoy the little things in life. Sometimes you get going so fast. I feel like the last three months have been like that for me. But don't forget to enjoy the little things in life. Watching a sunset with the one that you love, taking a walk in Audubon park, sitting in rocking chairs on the front porch watching the street cars go by, throwing the ball with your child out in the front yard. You work too hard not to enjoy those little things. So enjoy the little things.

My last piece of advise is don't forget why you were put on this earth. And Mayor Landrieu mentioned it earlier. We were all put on this earth to serve others. Sometimes the more successful that you get, people tend to forget that. It becomes more about how they can serve you as opposed to how you can serve others. So don't forget no matter how successful you become, which you all will, to serve others.

As you all sit here on graduation day, I believe that everyone here can agree that we have all been blessed with some great opportunities in our lives. Be appreciative and respectful of those opportunities and never take them for granted. And with that mindset just think about being able to give back what has been given to you. Take the time to

make a difference in the life of someone less fortunate. It's amazing that the more generous you are and the more you choose to serve others, the happier you will be.

And now for the words you've been waiting for - in closing, I would like to leave you with a quote. Oh we're going to finish strong don't worry. (cheers) We don't know any other way, so here we go. In closing, I want to leave you with a quote. And I could have chosen many profound quotes from presidents, CEOs, philosophers, but I am choosing one from my grandfather. He's 85 years old, he still lives on a ranch, herding cows in East Texas. His name is Ray Akins. And a quote I heard all the time from him when I was growing up was this, according to my grandpa 'there are three types of people in this world: There are those that make it happen, there are those that watch it happen, and then there are those that wake up one day and say what the heck happened.' So which one are you? - is what he would tell me.

So I leave you today but first saying congratulations to the 2010 graduating class of Loyola University. And now, let's go make it happen.