



GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY

THE MERCY UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

Daniel David Ginchereau '20
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There is a famous cartoon network program called *Adventure Time*. While it may sound childish to reference a cartoon during Commencement, I could not think of a more appropriate way to frame this speech. And, after all, it is 2020. So, in the final episode of *Adventure Time*, the characters are faced with great difficulty. The world as they know it may be coming to an end. They are scattered and scared, and they don't know what's gonna happen next. But then one of the characters sings the following song, which united the characters to work together to solve the challenges before them:

Time is an illusion that helps things make sense
So we are always living in the present tense
It seems unforgiving when a good thing ends
But you and I will always be back then

Will happen, happening, happened.
Will happen, happening, happened.
And we will happen, again and again,
'Cause you and I will always be back then.

If there was some amazing force outside of time
To take us back to where we were

And hang each moment up like pictures on the wall
Inside a billion tiny frames
So that we could see it all, all, all
It would look like . . .
Will happen, happening, happened

These words, “will happen, happening, happened,” help us cope to with changes in our lives, the loss of loved ones, and the fear of the future. Whether considering serious academic topics, or more seemingly simple things, like cartoons, we all have an inherent yearning for the past because nostalgia can bring us comfort.

Whether it be a trip abroad, an afternoon with cherished friends, an earth-shattering family moment, the beginning of a new friendship, or, perhaps, a few fleeting moments spent with a loved one no longer with us, we all wish we could relive certain moments of our lives, to take a trip back through time. These most precious moments are what we hold dearest. Through all of our activities and accomplishments, these memories are what we treasure above all others.

With those memories in mind, I find the phrase, “will happen, happening, happened,” extraordinarily comforting. To think that we could be living contemporaneously within each moment of our lives along with the feeling of our current experience, “will happen, happening, happened,” the thought is therapeutic and heuristic. Imagine it—every moment of our lives—both good and bad happening at once, again and again. Overwhelming, right? I believe that thinking of time and experiences in this manner is especially helpful because it allows us to reflect on all of the events that got us to this moment, right now.

If we could hang up every single moment of our lives, like pictures on the wall, with a billion tiny frames so that we could see it all at once, I am confident that if each of us devoted a few minutes of our hectic lives to experience this time exhibit, we would find bliss. Within these frames, we would see love, compassion, and hope. It is through these frames that we would find pure happiness and joy. Although there

would be painful moments, the feeling of reliving each happy memory is worth the sad ones.

Why don't we try it? We don't need cartoon special effects or a time machine. We don't even need to break the laws of physics. We just need our minds. To quote Mr. Rogers: "This is an exercise I like to do sometimes. We'll just take a minute and think about all the people who loved us into being. They will come to you. Just one minute of silence."

Now graduates, supporters in attendance, and the many watching at home, please take one minute to think of every person who has helped you become who you are today. Fill those frames with the images of your friends, families, and mentors. The near and the dear and the far away. Let us take one minute.

****One minute of silence****

Thank you for doing that with me. The people who support you and who are watching this ceremony can feel how important they are to you. And your accomplishments are their investments of time fulfilled. They are sitting in their seats saying, "I knew you could do it." They knew you could get to this point for as long as they've known you. They've always known it because images of you are stored in their time museum as well. They have believed in you every step of the way, so I am sure they will support my attempt to express their happiness for you.

To each loved one out there; parent, guardian, sibling, family, friend, grandparent, aunt, uncle, child, spouse, partner, and anyone else—I know I speak for every graduate when I say, unequivocally, that we are so grateful for your love, support, and kindness.

My fellow graduates, remember always the kindness and love that your friends, families, and supporters have shown you, and please, strive to emulate them. A year from now, 10 years from now, or 50 years from now, when you frame this

moment and you are overwhelmed with emotion, please, think of these words— "will happen, happening, happened"—and I guarantee, you will feel better. Be proud of who you are today, be thankful for those who have helped you reach this point, acknowledge what *you* have accomplished. Most of all, be excited for what tomorrow has to offer. It's up to us to frame that future.

Thank you for listening and, in the words of President Marbach, "Go Lions!"