

Saying Goodbye

And when [Paul] had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship. (Acts 20:36-38 ESV)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Saying goodbye is hard. You're at a party, enjoying the food and drink, the conversations, watching the big game on TV...and then it's time to go. Many hugs, lingering conversations, but eventually you get in the car and leave.


Saying goodbye is hard. The family reunion is winding down. So many activities, so many good memories: whitewater rafting, picnics, horseshoes, bad jokes...But it's time to pack up your stuff, load up the van, and hit the road. Some you may see again...some not.

Saying goodbye is hard. The doctors have done all they can do. The tubes are being taken out, the machines are being shut off, the I.V. lines are being removed...and you're just sitting there, holding your loved one's hand, waiting for the doctor to make their final declaration. Years of living your lives together, decades of marriage, kids, grandkids, great-grandkids...it will all be over soon.

Saying goodbye is hard...especially if you are not going to see the one you're saying goodbye to again.

When Paul said goodbye to the elders at the church in Ephesus, it was hard for everyone involved. All of them knew that they would never see each other again. The incredible and challenging ministry the Lord had set aside for Paul was coming to a close. He was going to go back to Jerusalem and his fellow Jews that he had once shared so much in common with were going to have enough of him and turn him over. It filled Paul and the Elders with grief. They had so many good memories together: preaching, teaching, discipling, serving, seeking and saving the lost...the Holy Spirit had done incredible things in Ephesus and beyond. And these things would continue throughout history...but Paul's time had come to an end. There were hugs, tears, prayers, words of encouragement and admonition...and then Paul got on a ship and left. It was hard.

It's hard for me to say goodbye to you, the people of Summit of Peace Lutheran Church. It has truly been an honor to serve you in the name of the Lord and to be your Associate Pastor. I love the relationships that I and my family were




able to build, and I love your faith, generosity and servant hearts. We have made many memories together through all kinds of ministries, from worship services to National Youth Gatherings, from Life Groups to Men's Bible Breakfast, from Thornton-Paint-A-Thon to Food for Hope packing. It has truly been a joy to shepherd, lead, encourage and teach you.

The Lord has called me to serve as Senior Pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church and School in La Grange, IL. So, it is time for me to say goodbye. Part of saying goodbye is saying thank you:

- Thank you for your prayers, gifts, love and support during my nearly five years here. Continue to offer these things to your ministry staff and leaders in the time ahead.
- Thank you for challenging me and stretching me in my thinking and my ministry in ways that no other congregation could. Continue to do this very thing for yourselves and others.
- Thank you to Pastor Jacoby for his direction and leadership. Your Senior Pastor is a committed missional thinker with a servant's heart. Continue to lift him up in your prayers and give him the loving support he needs and deserves. He has already led Summit of Peace to a good place and will continue to lead it to where the Lord desires you to go.
- Thank you for your support for myself and my wife, Melissa, as we journeyed through the Pastoral Leadership Institute. Your willingness and generosity in providing this growth opportunity has resulted in a transformation that we didn't expect. Continue to support the ongoing personal, spiritual and skills growth of your Senior Pastor, your ministry staff and your leaders.
- Thank you for your prayers and show of support during the call process with St. John's. It truly reveals your loving heart in Christ.
- Above all, thank you for being the people of God who live completely and totally by God's grace in Jesus Christ!

Yet, even though I say goodbye to all of you now, I will see you again someday. It may be at a ministry conference or at a National Youth Gathering. I have heard many of you say that you plan to drop in and say hi when you travel up to the Chicago area. I still have family connections in the Denver area that may provide an opportunity to see you again. However, some of you I may not see again in this lifetime, and that brings me to tears.

But I *will* see you again. And the tears that will be flowing will be tears of joy! For we will see each other when we will see our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, arriving out of heaven to raise us from the dead, never to die again, free of sin. On



that day, all tears will be wiped away. On that day, we will never have to say goodbye to each other! Instead, we will exchange greetings as we stand, resurrected, in our heavenly home. And we will say goodbye to sin, death, the devil and all evil, sorrow and destruction forever. And that will not be hard to do AT ALL!

Lord's blessings to you all!

God's peace in Christ,

Pastor Roberts