Last week in the Sunday *New York Times Magazine*, there was a full page comic making fun of our desire for new things. We’ve all been there. We’ll be there again. No doubt. The things that make our lives so much easier: because they do things so much quicker; they get things so much cleaner, brighter, lasting longer. These new things make *us* so much smarter, satisfied, powerful. You say it’s too much money; you say I don’t need it. You say it’s just a trinket!? Surely you don’t mean my iphone? Or the computer I’m now deleting a word and writing instead this one? The hybrid I drove to this commencement in? It is *unthinkable* not to have these things. I will *not* give them up.

There’s nothing inherently wrong with the new or wanting the new or creating the new or selling what’s new. Isn’t that what we admire most about our enterprising adventurous, daring American selves: inventors of electricity, explorers of the west, or the moon and Mars? Coming to America has allowed generations to imagine themselves anew, free to choose what to hold on to from the old country and what to adopt from the new and what to fashion into something else altogether.

We, of course, expect you, class of 2015, to continue to discover and create new things. Please figure out a cheaper way to desalinate water or manufacture energy that doesn’t pollute. Fix our world with a new thing, or better yet, figure out a new way of *doing* things that is more just and good. We count on you to do so. We trained you to do it. We have given you the *knowledge* to do it.

But I would end this short address with a very old piece of wisdom from the Old Testament, the book of Ecclesiastes, which tells us “There is no new thing under the sun. I have seen all the works that have been done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Even wisdom does not bring relief. . . . For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.”

We have taught you to make discoveries, yes, but we have also taught you how little we know still, about the next galaxy or the way the synapses in our brain communicate, much less how to be happy, or create a good society. With more knowledge comes a sense not only of possibilities but also of the great sorrows of life.

In the days ahead, knowledge may not bring you happiness but surely wisdom is what deeply binds us together in the shared course of our lives – in the grief that we will bear and the comfort we will give to each other.

So, class of 2015, do not forget this old place, this Pacific, your old (and getting older) teachers, the friends you made, an old book you read, a scrap of wisdom that will help you withstand whatever slings and arrows you may next encounter. Those scraps will continue to serve you as
you graduate forth and so will we in every way we can. Our very best wishes – for your happiness and great good fortune in the years to come.