Our scripture this morning comes from Proverbs 18:16. While you’re finding that, An auto-shop teacher asked one of his students to clean a car that was parked in the lot outside. He gave him two extension cords, the vacuum cleaner, a bucket, rags and the car keys. A little later, he went out and discovered him sitting in the car, feet up on the dashboard, listening to the stereo. The teacher asked, "Why aren't you vacuuming the car?" The student replied, “The extension cord wouldn't reach." Exasperated, the teacher said, "That's why I gave you two cords." The student shook his head, "I tried both. Neither would reach either."

**Proverbs 18:16 A man’s gift makes room for him, And brings him before great men.**

Today, we celebrate our graduates. This is a time of change. It’s a step into a new chapter of life. For some, it’s a step toward a career. Some, it’s a step toward higher education. No matter what, this is a time to sit down and give yourself a moment to appreciate what you’ve accomplished. Think of your hard work, the teachers along the way, your parents and all your earthly help. And, don’t forget God! He has been with you every step of the way.

 I want to ask you to remember a few things this morning. First, remember your raising. Proverbs 1:8-9 My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother; For they will be a graceful ornament on your head, And chains about your neck. You may get away from home and have people try to mislead you. They’ll tell you that what you’ve learned is wrong, old-fashioned, or discriminatory. Ask yourself – who will share my life journey? Chances are it’s not your professors or your boss, but rather your mama and daddy, your church, your friends, your family. No matter where you go, your raising goes with you.

 Remember, God has a plan for your life. Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. God has fashioned your talents and experiences perfectly. You’ll look back one day and realize that, even the painful things, were all part of God’s plan. He’s looking to prosper you – not in silver and gold, but in true riches of love and wisdom. Psalm 119:72 The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of coins of gold and silver. God’s plan is make us like Jesus.

 Remember, you may make all kinds of plans, but God is in control. Proverbs 16:9 A man’s heart plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps. The word in this scripture for plan means to weave. A man weaves his plans. The word for directs means to stand erect, to set up. My sister has a plaque that says – we plan and God laughs. God knows what we really want, even as we talk about worldly things. When we’re tempted to settle for less, God has plans for more. God establishes our steps.

 Remember, you have gifts to share with the world. Proverbs 18:16 A man’s gift makes room for him, And brings him before great men. When we’re true to God’s purpose, He opens doors. God has a plan for your gifts. Colossians 3:23-24 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. Use your gifts for the Lord and He will bless you in ways you can’t imagine.

 Finally, remember to always delight in God. Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Notice, this does not say the desires of your mind. God hears the heart. He knows your true desires. When we surrender, He will place us where He planned for us to be all along. Take delight in the Lord.

 Graduates, as you move forward, remember Deuteronomy 31:6 “Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.” Remember, this church loves you and we are always here for you. In all you do, we pray God’s blessings fall softly upon your back.