

Famed Clinical Psychologist Warns Students of the 'Devil at the Crossroads'

Famed clinical psychologist and author Dr. Jordan Peterson warned the graduates of Hillsdale College in Michigan on Saturday about the “devil at the crossroads” during his countercultural commencement address.

After a thunderous and sustained applause, Peterson told the graduating class they are at “a crossroads” in life.

“A crossroads – the metaphor works because you make a decision,” he said. “You go one direction or another. There’s an old ‘blues’ idea that you meet the devil at the crossroads. I always wondered why that was – I found it true. It’s a really compelling idea. It’s an image that has a good narrative fit, and it sticks in your memory once you hear it.”

It’s milestones like graduation, the 59-year-old mused, where people are forced to “examine” their consciences.

“Why do you meet the devil at the crossroads?” he asked rhetorically. “And the answer is, most fundamentally, because when you come to a place in your life where you have to make a choice ... you aim up or down. And there is always an agent of temptation at every choice point, enticing you to aim down.”

Peterson then turned to Scripture to explain how sin – which he defined as “missing the mark” – factors into the crossroads that punctuate people’s lives.

To paint a word picture of aiming down, he referenced the biblical story of Cain and Abel. Cain’s sacrifices, Peterson said, were “not everything that they could be” and “not in the service of the highest good.” He added that when people make

insufficient sacrifices, “we believe in the deepest part of ourselves that we’ve pulled one over on God.”

Peterson noted the English word *sin* found throughout the Old and New Testaments of the Bible comes from the Hebrew word *khata*, which is roughly translated as “to fail” or “to miss the goal.”

“It implies that it has something to do with aim or the lack thereof,” explained Peterson. “I love that. ... There’s a variety of ways you can miss the mark, right? Don’t aim at all – that’s a good one. Assume there is no such thing as aim. Assume all aims are equal.”

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