

You Won't Believe Why This School Forbade a Graduate's Speech

The small town of Akin, Illinois is the heartbeat of the heartland. It's a place where the crops are bountiful, and so are the patriots.

They don't even have a post office in Akin—but they do have a church. And around this part of the country, church is what folks do.

So you can understand the concern among townsfolk when the salutatorian at Akin Grade School was told he could not deliver his graduation speech because it was too religious.

Seth Clark, 13, was mighty proud of that speech. He referenced God, quoted from the Bible and even mentioned his Christian faith.

But just hours before graduation, Seth was told that he would not be permitted to deliver his remarks.

"As a public school, it is our duty to educate students, regardless of how different they or their beliefs may be," Supt. Kelly Clark wrote in a prepared statement to the ***Benton Evening News***.

"While students are welcome to pray or pursue their faith without disrupting school or infringing upon the rights of others, the United States Constitution prohibits the school district from incorporating such activities as part of school-sponsored events, and when the context causes a captive audience to listen or compels other students to participate," her statement read.

But that's not where our story ends.

Word began to spread around Akin that Seth's faith-based speech was not permitted on school property. And folks decided something needed to be done to right this wrong. Seth needed to be able to deliver the speech God had placed on his heart to deliver.

It just so happened that a neighbor of the Clark's owned a house across from the school, and he invited Seth to deliver the speech on his property.

"When it came time for the valedictorian and the salutatorian to deliver their speeches, they invited the audience to join them across the street at the house," Becky Clark told me. "It was not mandatory."

And sure enough, that's exactly what happened. Dozens of folks piled onto the front yard of the home and listened intently as young Seth delivered his address. I've posted video of the speech above.

"It was the proudest moment of my life," Mrs. Clark said. "He is more courageous at the age of 13 than I am at the age of 43."

She said her son is a tender-hearted person who just wants to be a man of God.

"This is not an attention thing for him," she said. "He wanted to share what was on his heart about God."

Seth Clark is an American patriot—a courageous young man who took a bold stand for his faith. It is a right that he is afforded under the United States Constitution, and it is a right that was denied to him as a result of faulty legal advice. {eoa}