Jacob Gunnyon

Last Lecture

I was honestly not looking forward to a 70+ minute lecture, but it was very enjoyable. He seemed like a genuine man who found purpose in his life and attempted to pass that along to his students and colleagues. From the audience it was apparent that he had touched many people throughout his life and had earned their respect. I think the most important part I pulled from his lecture was that he had accepted his fate and was still determined to enjoy his last months. He had every reason to not show up back at his school or accept any news interviews and just spend time with his family. Instead, he seemed to accept his fate and continue to live his life as he had and how he wanted to up until his ability to do so was gone. His whole lecture was him talking about his many accomplishments and thanking the people that had helped him along the way. What I saw was a man sharing the spotlight with people when he had every excuse in that moment to steal it.

His push to help keep people in that childlike curiosity/fun approach and try to accomplish their dreams was inspiring. Most people give up on childhood dreams and do what is practical in their life now instead of taking the risk and figuring out how to make those dreams a reality. I know I am guilty of focusing on the practicality of the now and setting aside what I had hoped to accomplish before. Now that I am older some of those earlier goals don’t apply to who I am or what I want now, but that doesn’t mean I can’t or shouldn’t create new goals to achieve. It seemed that he was proficient in this approach with his students and that he had hoped to pass that along into the education system as a whole.

His last message was that the entire lecture was really for his children and that clicked with me. He had told his life story in a fun and meaningful way to his children in the future, when they can fully appreciate and understand the impact he had created. He had a room full of colleagues and students who went on to do amazing things and he had a hand in helping them accomplish those goals. I found that incredibly touching and a great way to show his children his history, but more so how he approached his coming death. I believe he was happy with his life, his relationships, his accomplishments, and his impact on the world. Even facing death, his priority was about his family and not himself. He left with dignity and set a great example for his children to be proud of. I found this to be incredibly admirable.