

Colbert's commencement sermon

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[Stephen Colbert's commencement speech at Northwestern](#) wasn't as funny as [Conan O'Brien's at Dartmouth](#), but the inevitable "now I'm serious kids, please keep listening" section was far better--it was pretty much a hard-hitting sermon. Stressing that we were hearing from [Colbert the real-life person](#) and not [Colbert the character](#), the former offered something the latter never would:

Whatever your dream is right now, if you don't achieve it, you haven't failed, and you're not some loser. But just as importantly--and this is the part I may not get right and you may not listen to--if you do get your dream, you are not a winner.

After I graduated from here, I moved down to Chicago and did improv. Now there are very few rules to improvisation, but one of the things I was taught early on is that you are not the most important person in the scene. Everybody else is. And if they are the most important people in the scene, you will naturally pay attention to them and serve them You cannot "win" improv.

And life is an improvisation. You have no idea what's going to happen next, and you are mostly just making things up as you go along. And like improv, you cannot win your life.

[. . .]

In my experience, you will truly serve only what you love, because, as the prophet says, service is love made visible.

If you love friends, you will serve your friends.

If you love community, you will serve your community.

If you love money, you will serve your money.

And if you love only yourself, you will serve only yourself. And you will have only yourself.

So no more winning. Instead, try to love others and serve others, and hopefully find those who love and serve you in return.

Watch the whole thing: