

Sunday Sermon: August 12, 2018

Sermon Text: Hebrews 5:11 - 6:3

Sermon Theme: Grow Up!

¹¹ We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. ¹² In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! ¹³ Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, ² instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And God permitting, we will do so.

Growing up can be a wonderful thing. Many parents enjoy seeing their children pass through the different stages of growing up from a baby, to a toddler, from a child, to a teen-ager, then to an adult. We may have heard or even given the compliment, "*you look so grown up.*" Maybe we have even thought to ourselves they are "*growing up so fast.*"

Growing up is a wonderful and a blessed thing, but it can also be frustrating when a child is not *growing up* in the way or at the pace that they should be. For as many phrases about growing up that are positive, there are also many negative things that are said. Maybe you have heard, "*Why don't you just grow up and act your age.*" "*If you want to be treated as an adult, then act like an adult.*" or "*They just have some growing up to do.*"

Sometimes we have trouble growing up. There are things in our lives that we need to learn to overcome or to deal with in a more mature way. In our sermon text this morning, the writer to the Hebrews highlights an area of growth that we all need work on: growing in our faith and knowledge of our Savior, Jesus. Growing up is not a one-time action. Like any other part of our life, growing up in the Word is a lifetime of growth.

We don't know who the writer to the Hebrews was. There are many theories out there. What we do know is that the writer to the Hebrews was a man with a deep understanding of the Old Testament. He not only knew those Old Testament Scriptures, but unlike the other rabbis and teachers of his day, he also understood how they connected to Jesus. The book of Hebrews was written to connect Old Testament-believing Jews to their true Messiah and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The process of anyone in their walk of faith is kind of like growing up. Whenever anyone comes to faith, it is usually not a divine revelation where they immediately know and understand what God has revealed in his Word. More often, the process begins by the simple truths of Scripture: Jesus is my Savior, he loves me, he watches over me, he will take me to heaven.

Then as the person comes to church and to Bible study, the Holy Spirit continues to work and their faith in that Savior grows. They mature as that faith grows and their knowledge of their Savior deepens into more and more understanding.

We understand that growth in the word is really no different than any other part of our life where we want to grow. Growth takes time and energy. If you want to get better at your job, you devote time and energy to really learning your craft. If you want to make free-throws, you devote time and energy to shooting free-throws. If you want to learn how to crochet, you will devote time and energy to learn how. The same is true for growing up in the Word. If we really want to grow up in faith, it takes time being in the Lord's House, studying his Word.

The writer says, "¹¹ **We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn.** ¹² **In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again.**"

This sounds harsh, doesn't it? You are slow to learn, you need us to start all over again. Let's first take a look at this audience. These were not the people who had never heard about Jesus before. They were not recent converts to Christianity who would understandably have questions about who the Savior was and what he had done.

These were congregation members like every one of us sitting here this morning. These were people in whom the Holy Spirit had worked saving faith. They were the people who came to church and Bible Study. The first 5 chapters of Hebrews reviews all they had been taught about Jesus. These were people who had everything they needed to know and believe about their Savior.

Yet there was a problem. Like a doctor who has bad news after the tests, the writer points out that there is something wrong with these people. Something isn't working the way it should work. The writer shows some righteous frustration. It is righteous frustration because they people are not doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord and what is good for them to grow up in their faith.

He uses the picture of food to illustrate their problem of not growing up in faith like they should

By this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! ¹³ Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

Would you feed a baby a T-bone steak or the mother's milk? Would you feed an adult the T-bone steak or the mother's milk? It seems pretty simple doesn't it? The infant needs the simple food: the mother's milk, maybe some food out of a jar, but nothing solid because they can't handle it. In fact, if you try to feed the infant these complex foods they might die from choking or intestinal problems.

On the other hand, what does the adult want? No adult wants baby food. They want the foods that they like: T-bones, ribs, chicken, lobster, pizza and all the other complex things.

The analogy is simple. Although these people should have grown up, should have matured to learn the deeper things of God's Word, to have a stronger faith and deeper knowledge of Christ, they had not. They still only wanted those simple things.

That last sentence is very important for us sitting here this morning. **Anyone who lives on milk, is not acquainted with righteousness.**

There are many number of reasons why the people weren't growing up. Maybe they were not in the church services or the Bible Studies enough to grow up, maybe they weren't really paying attention when those things were talked about, maybe they just didn't agree with what they were begin taught, maybe they had the attitude they knew enough, or they didn't really need to know about these other things. Whatever the case, the writer says that with these attitudes they didn't know much at all.

What would the writer say about your faith? Would he say that you have grown up? Most of us would like to think that we have. But have we? Are we attending Bible Study or having devotions on a regular basis? Are we putting out faith in action with our time, talents and money? Are we living this life in thanks to Christ or in thanks to ourselves?

All of the attitudes that these Jews exhibited are not unique to them, they are the same for all sinners. We all have times when we do not want to grow up—we don't want to come to church or Bible Study and we come up with a reason why. We don't really pay attention to the readings and the sermon, we think that just being here is enough. We hear something that we just don't agree with and that upsets us. Or we have a very immature attitude towards the work that God has given us to do and instead of answering, "How can I help? How can I serve? What can I give?" We say, "Let someone else do it?"

In many ways the writer to the Hebrews would tell us to *grow up*, just as he told his own people to.

Our bulletin cover has the title *Grow Up!* but the verse underneath the seeds, ***grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ***, is not from Hebrews, it comes from 1 Peter 3. By putting these two portions of Scripture together we do see growing up is all about.

We grow up in faith when we make use of the Gospel in Word and Sacraments on a regular basis. Through the Gospel we hear the simple message of salvation through Jesus, but we see how deep that simple message really is. We grow up in faith when we are in the Lord's house to hear the saving Word, at his altar to see the blood poured out for you and for me and in regular and planned Bible Study. Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit builds our faith and grows us up in the knowledge of our Savior and what he has done. The writer says: **But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God.**

We grow up in the faith as the Holy Spirit reveals to us the depth of the love of our Savior and what he has done to save us. We grow in the knowledge of God as we study the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit reveals to the love of God on page.

God wants us to grow up so that we experience this amazing grace that he has shows us through Jesus. He wants us to grow up so that we trust in him for all good things on earth and in heaven. He wants us to grow us so that we find the peace of forgiveness that only Jesus can give and he wants us to grow up in the true faith which leads to heaven.

There is a third way to use grow up. There is the wonderful way, you are growing up too fast. There is the frustrated way, Grow up and act your age. Or there is God's way, grow up in your faith so that you will experience all my gifts and so that others may experience them too through you. May we grow up in faith as God wants us to.