

The Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost
August 19, 2012
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Hebrew 5:11-6:3

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 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! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 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, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.

“Grow up!” This is something an upset parent certainly might tell their teenager. However, it is not always kids needing to hear the rebuke to: “Grow up!” A spouse who is not holding up their end of the bargain, an adult who is acting immature or even an employee who has been lazy and inadequate for the job might all be told to grow up. But telling someone to grow up doesn't always have to be such a sharp rebuke. Sometimes we must encourage and explain to children or adults the need to grow up. Many children hurt, challenged, frustrated or heartbroken over life's experiences have been gently told these things are just a part of growing up. That people grow up can also be a prayer. In fact, that my children grow up healthy and strong is one of my most frequent prayers.

Children of God, today we are going to talk about growing up in a much more important sense. We are to grow up spiritually which is actually the top prayer I have for my children and all of us. God wants us to keep growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. God wants us to grow so that we do not fall from His grace. God wants us to grow up so that we might know Him and serve Him even better. So as God speaks to us in His Word this morning I want us to hear, yes first of all, a pretty frank rebuke, but also at the same time an encouragement and a prayer that each one of us: **Grow Up!**

The letter Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians, some who evidently were turning or were in danger of turning back to Judaism. What a terrible thing it would be after having free and full salvation in Jesus to revert back to slavishly trying to keep Old Testament laws and regulations in a futile attempt to earn salvation. So the author of this letter explains how Jesus is far superior in every way. In the most recent verses he teaches how Jesus is the great High Priest – the One who meets all our needs – the One who died for sins once for all so that no more Old Testament sacrifices or any sacrifices are necessary. Now this author explains how Christ was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek and he says in our verses “*we have much to say about this.*”

But there is a problem! The problem is not with the messenger or that the message itself is somehow too difficult or unclear to understand. The problem is with the people listening to the message. “*It is hard to explain because you are slow to learn.*” Literally, it says their ears have been dulled or they have sluggish ears. Ears that were

once eager to hear and learn the truths about Christ and God were now dulled and not ready or willing to receive deep truths. ***“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.”*** They had been Christians long enough that some of them should have been teaching these things to others. But instead they need to be the ones taught and the very basics at. They need the ABCs of God’s Word again!

Then he gives perhaps the harshest rebuke. ***“You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”*** Do you hear it? Grow up! Grow up! Grow up! You are still babies that need milk. Of course not that milk or the basic teachings about Christ are ever wrong to go over again and again. But they should have been eating solid food by this time. Through constant use of God’s Word they should have been much more mature. They should no longer be babies or as Paul writes in His letter to Ephesus: ***“infants tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming”*** (4). You see God does not want them to remain little children who do not know any better and who are easily influenced. God wants them to grow up spiritually so that their lives might be guided by the counsel and direction of His Word, so they might know right from wrong. It is time for them to: ***“Grow Up!”***

Do we hear the rebuke in these words? Do we need to hear it? Grow up! Have our ears become a bit dull to the message and our heart not as eager to hear the Word as perhaps it was at one time? Have we been Christians long enough that some of us could be teaching others by now? Are any of us still on the ABCs of Christianity? I am not asking this question to embarrass anyone, just to point out our need to keep studying God’s Word but: do you know why Christ is a priest in the order of Melchizedek? Are any of us content with milk and not ready for solid food? Yes, I am including myself in this rebuke because pastors too can think they have studied enough. After all, I went through as many years of school studying God’s Word as a doctor does studying medicine. Any time this attitude begins to creep in we need to hear: ***“Grow up!”*** We are in constant need of feeding on the Bread of life. We can never graduate from our study of God’s Word. God wants us to keep growing so that He can guide us in all our ways.

Grow up! Now listen as we are encouraged to do just this. ***“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity.”*** We don’t want to leave the ABCs about Christ. We want to build on them. The Greek translated let us ***“go on to maturity”*** has the thought of the believer not doing this on his own his or her own. It literally means to be carried along – for it is the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word. Why does this author want us to know more than the elementary teachings of Jesus? Why does he want them to build on this foundation? ***“Not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.”*** It is important to keep growing so that the faith they have is not completely lost.

Repentance and faith in God is of most importance. They don’t want to lose even the basics and he lists just a few. Baptisms and the laying on of hands that went with baptisms to symbolize God’s blessings on the person are the first two teachings he

mentions. Instructions about the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment are the other elementary teachings that Christianity centered on from the beginning. Again the point is God does not want us to lose the basics, but build on them. God wants us to grow up so that we do not go back to acts that lead to death – so that we are not turned away from Christ.

After all, Christ is the reason and the motivation each and every one of us want to grow up – ***“to leave the elementary teaching of Christ and go on to maturity.”*** For the astonishing truth is the Son of God Himself, the eternal Creator of all things, actually grew up for us. He became a baby that needed to grow up, and not just into a boy then a teenager and then a man. Jesus grew up in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men. Jesus who is the eternal Word and God Himself studied the Scriptures constantly and grew up into maturity. He loved God’s Word and held onto God’s Word above everything else. Jesus did so perfectly for sinners like us who have not. The Son of God did grow up into a man, also to die for sinners like us. On the cross Jesus took the punishment for all our childish sins and immaturity. Jesus’ shed His blood to wash away our every guilty stain. Jesus, the great high priest, sacrificed Himself on the cross once for all so we can go to heaven. On the third day we witness the most important teaching of all concerning the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

This last week was or for some this coming week is back to school time for the children. The question might come up as to why they have to go back. Why go back to first grade after having learned the ABCs in kindergarten? Why go to high school after having completed elementary school? Why do our children need to keep learning at school? It is a part of growing up. It is part of preparing for life. We want our children to grow. And how much more is this true spiritually! We want our children and ourselves to be prepared not only for life but for eternal life.

So today it is not just a rebuke, not just an encouragement, but it is also a prayer that each one of us: “Grow up!” In less than a month from now we will be going back to our regular Sunday school and Bible class schedules. We will have other opportunities, for our kids, for our teens, and for our adults here at Amazing Grace to learn more about our God and Savior. There are more chances to grow up. What a wonderful blessing it would be to have every single person commit to some kind of Bible study, whether on Sundays or Thursday nights here at church or even with a Bible study that you can take home! What a blessing it would be if every one of us makes an extra effort to learn more this year by reading our Bibles, using faithfully the meditations and forward in Christ, reading not deleting the weekly devotions so that we grow up! Children of God, how can we who have been forgiven & wrapped in the love of Jesus, not want to grow up? How can we not want milk and solid food after we, as we sang in our Psalm, have tasted that the Lord is good? This is my prayer for each of us – that we grow up – ***“and God permitting, we will do so.”*** Amen.