

**Sermon – “WHY DON’T YOU GROW UP?”  
(Youth Confirmation)**

**May 31, 2009  
Hebrews 5:11-6:2**

Ever notice how quickly children grow up?

Just yesterday, it seems, we brought our little ones to the font  
for baptism.

Just yesterday, it seems, we watched them toddle off to kindergarten.

Now look at them!

Today here’s a whole group of them, seated together in their white confirmation  
robes, looking mighty grown up

Before you know it, they have driver’s licenses

they’re in college...

they’re getting married

and you, mom and dad, have to get used to new titles: GRANDMA & GRANDPA!

How quickly children GROW UP!

Have any of you parents ever said what Sue and I used to say as we tiptoed out of  
our children’s bedrooms... “They’re getting SO BIG!

I just hate to see them GROW UP!”

Did you ever say that?

But stop and think. Suppose that wish were granted.

Suppose that, as of today, our children stopped getting taller, stopped changing,  
stopped learning.

We wouldn’t call it a DREAM COME TRUE...we’d say it was a TRAGEDY.

We’d be weeping and praying to God...

We’d be spending every last dollar for medical help to restore  
NORMAL DEVELOPMENT.

I know from sad experience, because this very thing has happened in my family.

Many of you know that our grandson John has been diagnosed by doctors  
with a condition called “Failure to thrive.”

He is almost 8 years old, and weighs only 31 pounds. All this in spite of countless  
prayers and medical intervention that has included Human Growth Hormone.

There are families who face this or some similar situation.

When it happens PHYSICALLY or MENTALLY,  
we say that child is DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED.

When a person has a normal body or mind, but doesn't grow up socially, we say  
he is IMMATURE. This condition, too, is TRAGIC!

An immature person avoids responsibility, begs for attention,  
and pouts when he doesn't get his way.

It isn't cute or funny in the least for a fully-grown person to "act like a baby."  
We get irritated after a while.  
We may say, "Hey, WHY DON'T YOU GROW UP?"

The point of my sermon this morning is that the same thing can happen SPIRITUALLY.

Some people who are "born again" into God's family  
simply STOP GROWING...  
they remain spiritual babies in their Christian faith and life.

The Confirmation Day we observe today is a good occasion for us  
to think about how FIRM we are...how FAR we've come in our walk as  
disciples of Jesus Christ.

So on this Confirmation Sunday I selected a passage that will speak, I hope,  
not only to the class being confirmed this morning, but to all the rest of us.

Listen to the words of Hebrews chapter five:  
**READ THE TEXT**

Do you hear the CHALLENGE in these words?  
The challenge is: CHECK YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH!

We do it with BABIES, don't we, to see if all is coming along normally?

Doctors have charts that show normal growth patterns...  
Find the baby's AGE, and then match weight and length against it.

Perhaps by 6 months a baby should measure 27 inches long  
and have nearly doubled his birth weight.

In a similar way, the Holy Writer says in verse 12,

**“By this time you ought to be...”**

By this time.

How long have you been a Christian? 6 months? 6 years? 50 years?

How much growing have you done in that time?

And where ought you to be **BY THIS TIME**?

The writer to the Hebrews

furnishes us with two important measuring devices...

not **LENGTH** and **WEIGHT**

but **KNOWLEDGE** and **BEHAVIOR**

First, are you growing in **KNOWLEDGE**?

The writer of Hebrews uses the picture of baby's **DIET**:

Are you still drinking **MILK**, or have you been weaned to **SOLID FOOD**?

If you are a new Christian, of course, you need **MILK**!

That is to say, simple spiritual truth. The kind the writer mentions in chapter 6, teachings about

**repentance....and faith...baptism...the resurrection of the dead...  
and eternal judgment**

It's been fun for me to sit with the 10 young people being confirmed today and hear the enthusiasm they feel about what they've learned in class.

In our confirmation classes here at Trinity, we try to stick to basics like these.

We start with the **CATECHISM** (you all got a copy, right?)...

We work through the six chief parts, those things Luther thought every Christian (even the simplest) should know:

**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

**THE APOSTLES' CREED**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**BAPTISM/ HOLY COMMUNION/ CONFESSION**

But once these basics have been thoroughly studied and “digested,” the writer urges us to

**leave the elementary doctrines...and go on to maturity.**

So, here's a question. **ARE WE?**

It's a source of joy for me to see some of you who are learning, growing.  
Some of you are tackling the writings C. S. Lewis and Martin Luther  
and Charles Swindoll and report to me your "thrill of discovery."

Some of you attend Bible Study Fellowship, or a home study group.  
Others came to the Thursday morning class that dug into Daniel and 1 John,  
or the men's Saturday morning breakfast study.

You're learning much! Don't let up! Keep growing!

But it is a sorry sight to see others of us letting our minds RUST SHUT.

Why must we have to plead with adult believers to come to a class?  
Why are there so many who have made no serious attempt to study God's  
Word since your own confirmation day 20 years ago...or 30 ... or 40 years ago?

If you have not opened your Bible or Catechism lately...  
if you have not memorized any Scripture lately...  
if you have forgotten even what you once learned in confirmation class,  
**SHAME ON YOU!**

**By this time**, says the holy writer, **you ought to be teaching others!**

Is it any wonder that so few of us have brought another person to Jesus Christ,  
that we feel so ill-equipped to answer the questions or challenges others bring?

Is it any wonder that when some moment of trial of serious crisis comes,  
we go to our spiritual wells and find that they have RUN DRY?

If we do not **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord**,  
**WE DISHONOR** Him who made our minds and calls us to use them!

**ARE you GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE?**

If so, we rejoice with you. We urge you to do so more and more!

But there's a **SECOND MEASURING STICK** to be checked this morning.

God expects that, in addition to our **KNOWLEDGE**,  
our **BEHAVIOR** is also changing, maturing.

All new Christians, for example, need to begin to practice such **BASIC THINGS** as

how to WORSHIP,  
how to CONFESS SINS and PRAY FOR OTHERS,  
how to make a simple WITNESS about Jesus.

How about you, confirmation class? Is your Daily Quiet Time in place?

But as a Christian grows up in faith, says verse 14, he needs to have  
**trained (himself) to distinguish good from evil.**

That includes such mature behavior as  
getting along with people who irritate us  
weeding out destructive habits  
learning how to keep our mouths closed at the proper times  
and  
handling frustration or suffering with a cheerful spirit

Our behavior is a matter of special concern to God, for it is HOW CHRISTIANS ACT  
that is seen and judged by the world...more than how we think or talk!

When it comes to Christian BEHAVIOR,  
how is it with you?

Some, I rejoice to say, have grown enormously in this area.

I see marriages filled with patience and respect.

I hear good things about how some of you have helped neighbors in time of need  
and how very many have taken a turn at helping with those meals down at  
Transition House.

I'm impressed with the maturity and responsibility of our boards and their leaders,  
the relationships in our youth group,  
and the quiet, steady encouragement some are giving others.

At the same time,

I am distressed by what is happening in other lives,  
in people who say they are Christians but are still wearing spiritual "diapers":  
who refuse to forgive  
who complain frequently and loudly  
who engage in sexual sin as if it had nothing to do with their confession  
of Jesus as Lord.

Isn't it long PAST TIME for us to grow up?

God has something important in mind for us (12)  
**By this time you ought to be TEACHERS**

God intends, not only that YOU lead a holy life,  
but that your life becomes an instrument that helps others live that way too.

Your children... your neighbors... your co-workers.

WHAT ARE THEY SEEING IN YOU?

When I was a boy, there was a house in our neighborhood begun, but never finished.

It had a foundation, and the WALLS and the ROOF were framed in.  
But then construction ceased. Maybe the builder ran out of money.

What had started out to be a beautiful addition to our neighborhood  
turned into an ugly eyesore.

So too, your life is “under construction.”

When your neighbors watch, do they  
**see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven?**  
or do they mutter, “What a hypocrite!”?

Maybe, as you sit listening this morning, you want to grow up, grow more mature,  
grow stronger, but you DON'T KNOW HOW.  
You feel HELPLESS, or HOPELESS.

If so, you need, says this writer, **Someone to teach you again**

May I show Him to you?

Later in this book of Hebrews, in chapter 12, the writer urges his readers:  
**Look to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.**

Jesus pioneered things for us.

He talked the Talk to us – teaching in the Temple and by the Sea.  
He walked the Walk for us – up to Jerusalem, up to Calvary, up to heaven again.

He got things rolling on our baptism day.  
Cleaned us up. Gave us that new life and new birth.

But he is no “love ‘em and leave ‘em” Savior who disappears once we’ve been  
born again

like the parents we read about who leave their babies on church doorsteps!

**NO! He is the PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH**

through that healthy diet of His Word  
in Scripture, or in a sermon,  
or through the corrective words of people who care enough about us to  
look us in the eye and speak the truth.

Have our ears grown DULL OF HEARING?

I pray not!

But if they have, I pray that this message will speak to you today,  
will encourage you to look to Jesus, listen to Him, ask His help.

God loves us!

In Jesus He brought us to birth.

Now He calls His little children to grow into adulthood,  
and he Himself promises to perfect that faith through His Word.

An old black man was once asked what he thought of the progress that black people  
had made in this country.

He replied simply: “We ain’t what we gonna be...but thank God,  
we ain’t what we was!”

Young people in the confirmation class of 2009, “you ain’t what you was!”

You are firm in your faith today. But we don’t want you to stay the way  
you are... Since you “ain’t what you gonna be,” we want you to  
grow UP, grow STRONGER, grow to be TEACHERS of others!

That goes for the rest of us...

Thank God, “we ain’t what we was”!

Let us today resolve to hear His Word and obey it, so we can say,  
“Thank God, we ain’t what we gonna be!” **WE’RE GROWING UP!”**

In the name of Jesus. Amen.