

Amazing grace: Grow Up in your Faith!

St. Luke's Lutheran Church; Oakfield, WI

Sermon

August 9th, 2009

Ephesians 4:1-7,11-16

Remember your roots

Prepare for works of service

Ephesians 4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Introduction: Grace, mercy and peace to you, the body of Christ, who have been joined together for the benefit of others.

Are you mature? Has anyone ever described you as a "kid at heart"? New research is coming in that reveals grown-ups are more immature than ever. Among scientists, the phenomenon is called psychological neoteny. The theory's creator is Bruce Charlton, a professor in the School of Biology at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, England.

"People such as academics, teachers, scientists and many other professionals are often strikingly immature outside of their strictly specialist competence in the sense of being unpredictable, unbalanced in priorities, and tending to overreact."

Meanwhile a report, Stay at Home Youth, last year highlighted the 'little Emperor' syndrome.

The study by market researchers among 12 to 34-year-olds, warned that people are maturing much later because they are being over-indulged by their families.

Longer stays in the 'comfort zone' of home is creating a generation of twentysomethings who are less able to cope. Time magazine called this group "Twixters".

The report said: 'Broadly speaking we are dealing with a generation who are less mature, less independent and less capable.

'Parents have created a dynamic where twentysomethings have little grasp of how to manage adult life.'

Immaturity in our children is cute and endearing. We don't expect our grade-schoolers to be able to make decisions based on what others need or want. Even among young Christians, the same holds true that we expect there to be immaturity in their faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ and His Will for life on earth and into heaven.

But what about you today? What about St. Luke's family of believers? Are we suffering from a maturing physical age and the immaturity of a stunted faith? The Apostle Paul encourages the Ephesians' Congregation to grow up in their faith and knowledge of the Son of God until they all reach unity in heaven. By God's Amazing grace – Grow up in your Faith! Remember your roots and Prepare for works of service.

1) remember your roots

NIV Ephesians 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called—5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Part of maturing as a child is to be able to know who you are in comparison to other people. By nature all of us are Me-centered. There is simply no life outside of the mind of me. My wants, my needs, my likes, my dislikes is what makes the Me world go round. That is immaturity. Over time, through teaching and explaining, words and actions, parents and grandparents, teachers and pastors, tell the children the truth in love about themselves: You are a sinner. You have lived, acted, spoken and thought that no one else mattered except you. God created you and expects you to serve him first and others second while yourself comes a distant third. You are a sinner. You have disrespected God, disobeyed God. You are not standing in His favor or going to receive His protection or blessing. You are a sinner, standing in line waiting for punishment from the one and only God who created you and this world.

Those are our roots as sinners. We cannot change our roots. It is who we are and what we have become – miserable disobedient sinners. We all share those roots in common. Thank God we also share another common root – our Christian faith. As Christians, we believe that the one God and Father of all, sent His One Son to die for our sins and live for our obedience. As Christians, our roots go back to one hope – that Jesus Christ is our Savior from sin, all its punishments even death itself has been removed! As Christians, we were all joined to Christ with one baptism, by One Holy Spirit from God. We enjoy that one great peace that we are children of the God who made us and saved us. Through Christ, God now smiles on us everyday. As Christians that is our one common root. Remember your roots – sinners, yet now members of God’s forgiven family.

The problem is that we are pulled by our own sinful flesh, this world and the power of the devil to revert back to being immature punks thinking that the universe is pulled around the gravitational force of my wants, my needs, my likes and my dislikes. That is a sign of spiritual immaturity. The results of remembering your roots as a sinner and as a forgiven family member of God is that we will think, act, talk and live **humbly** knowing that we deserve nothing but God graciously gives us everything we need. Mature Christians are patient and bear with others because they know where they came from themselves – sinners yet forgiven because of God’s grace. Remembering our roots frees us to see others the same way – sinners yet forgiven.

I had a friend who was married, had a couple kids and a good paying job. Well he became a Christian that year. He came to me once and said Pastor I want to talk to you about the Smith kids. They keep bothering me during church. They keep bumping my chair and spilling their drinks and food every Sunday. You have to do something about all these kids in church.”

I said to him, ”Don’t forget the patience God showed you over the years that you lived selfishly – without hope and without care for others. Where would you have naughty children sent on a Sunday morning? Where do you think the Devil wants us to put those children? Do you think they need to hear of God’s forgiveness too?”

Let us grow up in our Faith and remember our roots as sinners and forgiven children of God. Being humble and patient with the family members around us.

2) Prepare for works of service

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Have you ever heard yourself or a loved one say, “I don’t want to grow up.” Maturing is tough. The more mature we are the more that is expected from us. As children the expectations are minimal. But as we mature we have responsibilities to use the gifts we have been given. Why? Why am I my brother’s keeper? Why do I have to be responsible? Why do I have to be my best at home at work and at play? Why do I have to be involved in church too? Why can’t enough be enough?

The apostle Paul reminds us that there is a purpose to Jesus Christ’s plan of scattering gifts around his family. “to prepare God’s people for works of service.” Why do you think Jesus started the office of pastor for his family? It is the same reason why he made you a father or mother, brother or sister? My responsibility is to prepare all of you to do the Lord’s Work.

“Right now Pastor I don’t have much in the way of spiritual gifts. I can’t do much – I have my job and my family – I can’t handle much more than that. “

That’s the problem. You can’t handle much more. That’s a spiritual problem. The truth is that you can handle much more, except you are not spiritually mature enough to handle it. The Lord will not give you more than you can bear. That is true. It is also as true that the Lord gives His church, the body of Christ, the gifts to do the great works of service he has planned for us. For us to grow in our works of service for God’s kingdom as the apostle Paul said in verse 17 of chapter 4, the Lord insists that we stop thinking like the Me-world of selfish immature punks and start maturing spiritually.

Now how do we go about maturing so that we are prepared and equipped for the great ministry the Lord has planned for us – after all we are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which the Lord prepared in advance for us to do.

We need to grow in Faith and Knowledge in the Son of God. Use the means the Lord has given to gain valuable experience in how God thinks, how he operates and his final goal and will for all sinners. I’m referring to daily bible reading, like a one year bible, or daily Meditations the newest one begins August 30th. Corporate bible study – adults teens, men and women, Sunday School, Christian Day School. You want to talk about preparing and equipping to do God’s Work, then there is nothing better at our disposal than our Christian Day School is it! Every day they are reading God’s Word –talking about his plan and purpose for the world from History to Science to works of art and literature. “It’s time to grow up, boys” was the phrase I heard from my High school football coach at our biggest games. There are many times in a young man’s life when it’s time to grow up. At the death of a loved one. I still remember the funeral of my grandfather when I was in grade-school. My first fist-fight. My first year of tackle football. My first year at the Seminary. My wedding day. My brother’s diagnosis of boner cancer. My children’s birth. All difficult things at the time, but now I look back on them and they all seem so easy to overcome. God prepared me for all those events by teaching me His Word. His Word was with me through all those things guiding my decisions and picking me up when I had fallen.

It’s time to grow up – I insist on it as does the Lord. Grow up in your faith. Remember your roots as sinners and the forgiven family of God. Stay humble and then prepare yourselves and your families for great works of service in God’s Kingdom by using the means he has given to us by studying His Word.