

Pastor Rich Elseroad

Time to Grow Up!

I Peter 2:1-10

Happy Mother's Day!

I read about a study that shows that by the time a child reaches 18, a mother has had to handle some 18,000 hours of extra child-generated work. In fact, says this study, women who never have children enjoy the equivalent of an extra three months a year in leisure time!

James Dobson tells about a time he came home when his son, Ryan was a small baby. It had been a terrible day for his wife, Shirley. Ryan had been sick, and had cried all day long. Once, as she was changing his diapers, the phone rang and Shirley reached over to answer it before fastening up his diapers. Just then Ryan had an attack of diarrhea.

Shirley cleaned up the mess and put him in clean, sweet-smelling clothes. Then she took him to the living room and fed him. As she was burping him he threw up all over himself, and her, and the couch, too. Dodson writes, "When I came home I could smell the aroma of motherhood everywhere."

We appreciate you mothers!!

Based on our Scripture for today in I Peter, I want to talk to you about how we grow up in Christ. Let me speak of an imaginary person who comes to church. He sees people around him sincerely confessing sins...singing...praying...giving offerings. He's an observer not a participant. It is all a bit alien to him.

He hears the Word of God and the sermon and it does peak his interest. He comes a few more times. He wanders in on a Bible study and notices how intent people are about digging into the Scriptures and trying to understand them.

Then, and how he doesn't really know, the Holy Spirit came upon him. He starts to really desire to read the Bible. In fact he starts craving it. It is like what it says in our text: he's a baby Christian and he longs – he hungers and thirsts for

the Word of God. It disturbs him. It confuses him. It causes him guilt. It gives him joy, hope and excitement.

Now in church he lays aside that male ego/pride and his own self-consciousness and he sings! He laughs to himself saying he is obeying the Word when it says make a *joyful noise* to the Lord.

He's not observing anymore, he's participating. He never gave an offering before – his money was his. But now he understands. God gave him everything he had. And now out of love for God he's giving a portion back as an act of worship.

New insights were coming to him most every day. He resonated with Psalm 42: *As a deer pants for flowing streams of water/so pants my soul for you O God. My soul thirsts for God/for the living God.* He craved the good stuff – the pure spiritual milk – unadulterated.

As he was growing in love with Jesus he knew he had to rid himself of somethings in his life. He had a business partner in their contracting business and he hated him. The truth is they hated each other. Their mutual malice was hidden by their deceitful and sneaky ways they tried to get the edge on each other. He hated his partner mainly because he envied him. He had more money, more success and a bigger everything. In his resentment he often talked about him behind his back and slandered him.

In his growing faith he knew Jesus said, 'Forgive as I have forgiven you.' He knew too, that his relationship with his partner in business had to change. So he set up a meeting. He laid it all out. He confessed his resentments and all the things he had done wrong. He expected anger and retaliation and maybe an end to their partnership.

But he was shocked when his partner confessed his own misdeeds. They actually ended up praying together and pledged to form a new way of dealing with each other. Incredibly they agreed to start a weekly Bible study for their crew and anyone of their friends to join them at 6:30 am every Thursday.

With all his growth in the Lord and his life changes, the man still nevertheless had a nagging dissatisfaction with his spiritual growth. When he mentioned this in a Bible class at church, he was surprised that nearly everyone in the class felt the same way in spite of the fact that there were some very mature Christians in the class.

The pastor would later explain to him and others that this was an inbred quality the Holy Spirit brought. The pastor called it a “holy discontentment” and showed how the Apostle Paul was a good example of it.

Now the man realized that his whole life needed to be built on Jesus. Jesus, the Living Stone, was also the foundation, the corner stone of Christian’s lives and of the Church. As a contractor and builder this imagery really spoke to him. A Living Stone as contrasted with a dead stone – an idol as those he read about in the Old Testament.

He thought about what people built their lives on – what their idols were. He knew many of his friends built their lives and self-image on money and success. There were others he knew who were proud of their education and status in the community. He even had a friend who built his life entirely on his political ideology. They looked to these things to satisfy them, to make them feel good and to bring meaning to their life, none of which they could do.

But with his new vision thanks to Jesus and the Spirit, he saw all these who trusted in idols were like people drinking salt water in the hope of quenching their thirst.

The world trashed Jesus, but Jesus was the only one with whom you could build your life on, that is if you were to know true satisfaction –true life. So many of his friends had stumbled over Jesus. Oh they may go to church every once and awhile if they felt like it, but they didn’t see Him as the foundation of their lives. They were lost.

Now all this made the man see the chief purpose of his life. The Scripture said he was part of a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God’s own possession – belonging to Him.

He heard his pastor use this illustration: If you go to a museum and you will see items like a hat, a cane, a scarf...just common objects seemingly of no great value or importance. Then you read the hat belonged to Abraham Lincoln, the cane to Teddy Roosevelt, and the scarf to Charles Lindbergh. Now the objects become valuable because of whom they belonged to. Just so because we belong to God we are special, we are valuable.

Furthermore, in the Old Testament the priests were an exclusive lot. They were the only ones to enter certain parts of the Temple. And no Gentile could be a priest. The Kings and Princes – the royals – were also an exclusive bunch with power and authority. So when the Word of God announces that we are royal priests it is telling us that we are the ones to bring people close to God and we have authority and power granted to us by Christ.

The man came to understand that the church was a spiritual house and that we are holy – meaning set apart – to make known the presence of God and the glory of Jesus that others might come to believe in Him. Every church was to be like an embassy in a foreign nation representing their country.

The man thought about his many unbelieving friends and how different their lives, their desires and their ambitions were from him. He wanted his friends to know Jesus – to have this blindness become sight as it had for him.

As he reflected on his journey with the Lord, he knew he had a long way to go. The people at his church were now his family and he and they intended to display the glory of Christ and His love to their neighbors and friends.

Now let me ask you on this Mothers' Day: Are you growing up? Do you long for the Word of God? Do you worship Jesus? Are you a participant or are you just an observer? And are you joining in the mission God has given us?

My friends it is time for us to grow up!

To Christ and to His glory! Amen!

