

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

December 30, 2018

Old Testament Reading; 1st Samuel 2: 18-20, 26

Responsive Reading; Psalm 148

Epistle Reading; Colossians 3: 12-17

Gospel Reading; Luke 2: 41-52

Sermon Title: Grow in Stature and in Favor with God and Men

By Rev Jim Gardner

Summary: First to Samuel then to Jesus and now it is our turn.

And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the Lord and men.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men.

Youth is a reoccurring theme in the bible, especially in relationship with wisdom, judgment and maturity.

In 1Corinthians 13:11 Paul says, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a

child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

In Jeremiah 1: 4-10; “Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ‘Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; Before you were born, I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.’ Then I said: ‘Ah, Lord God! Behold I cannot speak for I am a youth.’ But the Lord said to me; ‘Do not say, ‘I am a youth, for you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you,’ says the Lord. Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: ‘Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant.’”

Note, it says, “You shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak.” It does not say, “You shall go where ever you want and say whatever pleases you.”

Finally, in 1 Kings 3: 7-9; Solomon says, “Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too

numerous to be numbered or counted. Therefore, give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”

Now I have a strange question for you.

When do you stop being a youth? When can you hang up your thinking cap and say, “Now I am a grown up? Now I have the answers.”

Personally, I do not think I will ever get there. When I am stressed out on what I should do in some situation and I am praying for guidance I am apt to say, “Hey God this kid needs a little help here.” I am almost 73 years old and when I am talking to God, I refer to myself as a kid.

In 2 days, we will start a new year. Is that a time to start a new chapter in our lives or considering that most of us are in our golden years does that mean we just need to tread water until God calls us home?

I do not have an answer for you but for myself I feel that as long as God is keeping me around, he probably has more for me to do. I don't really know what that might be but I am sure it is not the same thing that he was expecting of me 20 or 30 years ago. It might be praise or it might be some kind of action.

The Psalmist was big on praise while with me I just blurt out, “I love you God”, when I think of, hear, or see something that reminds me of how blessed I am.

Maybe if we put our Psalm and Epistle together, we can get a hint of what we can do to grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

Praise the Lord from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all you stars of light!

Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, For He commanded and they were created. He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away. Praise the Lord from the earth, You great sea creatures and all the depths; Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word; Mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars; Beasts and all cattle; Creeping things and flying fowl; Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth; Both young men and maidens; Old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven. And He has exalted the horn of His people, The praise of all His saints, Of the children of Israel. A people near to Him. Praise the Lord!

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness,

longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Set the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

If we do these things, we like Samuel and like the boy Jesus can grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

Hallelujah and Amen!