

**Rev. Seth D. Bode † Sermon 379, 06-07-2020 † Confirmation**

*“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,”* John 12:21.

*“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,”* Mark 9:24.

**JUDE 20-21**

*But you, dear friends, continue to build yourselves up in your most holy faith as you keep praying in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God’s love as you continue to wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, which results in eternal life.*



We join our hero of the story, Danny, after he was beat up by some bullies at a Halloween party. But he was rescued; an old karate master swept in to defend Danny and put the bullies in their place. Reluctantly, the karate master agreed to teach Danny karate, too, so that he could defend himself against those guys.

However, the old karate master (named Miyagi) instead put Danny to work. He made Danny paint his fence and house, wash and wax his cars, and sand his floors. He was careful to tell Danny how to do each of these jobs. Paint the fence was an up-down motion; wax the cars was a sweeping wax-on, wax-off motion. For four days Danny showed up to learn karate, but instead Mr. Miyagi told him to paint the fence (up-down) or wax the cars (wax-on, wax-off).

Finally, at the end of the fourth day, Danny had it. In a rage, Danny threw down the paintbrush and exploded at Mr. Miyagi. “You said you would teach me karate, but instead you have me doing all these odd jobs for you like some kind of slave.” Mr. Miyagi turned around and told Danny to show him “paint the fence, up-down.” Slowly but deliberately, Miyagi pretended to punch Danny, but the up-down motion blocked the punch. Then Miyagi told Danny to sand the floor. Miyagi pretended to kick Danny, but the sanding motion blocked the kick. Miyagi pretended to strike Danny high, but the wax-on, wax-off motion blocked each stroke. Suddenly, Danny learned that Miyagi had been teaching him karate the whole time, building muscle memory so he would be ready to defend himself.

Dear confirmands, this is what God has been doing with your Bible, your catechism, your parents, and your pastor. Yes, this is what God has been doing your whole life. Every time you memorized a Bible verse or followed instructions in your catechism workbook or read a lesson in the Bible, you were preparing for

tests and trials to come IRL. You were readying your new man to defend yourself against the devil, the world, and your own sinful nature. You were practicing for real-life situations. It may have seemed pointless and unfair to learn a passage, cruel to study for an examination, a difficult challenge to write and speak an essay. But if you're wise, God will one day show you why.

Sometimes the hardest thing for a confirmation pastor to attempt is to teach lessons without being able to impress on you HOW VALUABLE it will be for you later in life. If you'll just ...

## **BUILD ON YOUR HOLY FAITH**

We don't look at the book of Jude very often. It's incredibly tiny, but powerful. Jude was the brother of James, and both names appear in a list of Jesus Christ's half-brothers. Perhaps Jude was a son of Joseph and Mary.

A good theme of the book of Jude is "contend for the faith." Jude writes against what he calls "the evil." The evil was setting aside the Law of God from the Bible. Churches seemed to be ignoring the Law of God as summarized in the 10 Commandments, as if, once you believe, you don't need to be told God's Law. Sometimes we call this error, the "evil," antinomianism.

So Jude encouraged his readers to BUILD ON THEIR MOST HOLY FAITH. This faith is best understood here as "the faith which is believed"; i.e., the Christian truths that our faith believes. Faith is everything we talked about in catechism class, all of Christian doctrine. In order to live holy lives, Christians need to follow the Law as guide, for that is part of the faith.

So Jude gives three ways to BUILD themselves ON THEIR MOST HOLY FAITH, kind of like Mr. Miyagi gave Danny different instructions for karate. 1. For one, Danny had "up-down" to paint the fence; but Jude tells you confirmands to "*keep praying in the Holy Spirit.*" I do not have to reread your essays that explained how to pray various petitions. But how will you know what to pray?

You will need to pause and be still and adore the marvelous fact that God has made you His own child. You will praise and thank Him for that. You will need to consider your sins and how you have allowed your sinful nature to fester and act out from inside you. You will need to find God's words of forgiveness and take

them to heart. And you will need to talk to friends and enemies, boyfriends or bullies, and ask them their needs and learn how to pray for them. So you will use these catechism truths and this muscle memory of faith and build on it.

2. Second, Danny had to “wax-on, wax-off” but you have this advice: “*keep yourselves in the love of God.*” The love of God is very powerful. God the Father “*so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*”

There were two friends and, after time, their friendship deteriorated. The one friend said, “What happened to our friendship? Where did you go?” The other friend responded, “I didn’t go anywhere! You left the chess club and joined the hockey team and started mocking people at school. I didn’t go anywhere; YOU changed.” Sometimes a friend gets put in a place where she has to admit, “Oh yeah. That’s true, I left.” That can happen with your Lord, too.

Confirmation students of days past have strained their relationship with God: They have discontinued worshiping at the Lord’s house. They’ve wandered into other sins. They’ve stopped seeking God in His Word and sacrament. They stopped praying through life. Finally, they looked around and said, “God, what did you do to our relationship?” But God never left them or forsook them. It was the confirmed son or daughter who left God. Let’s hope you never leave God, for never will He leave you, never will He forsake you. He died for you and He wants you to remain in Him and in His love. Learn from His Word! Hear His Law! Trust His Gospel! Grow in grace and knowledge! Come to communion, and come often! Nothing keeps you in God’s love like Word and sacrament and all God’s promises within them.

3. Third, Danny had to “sand-the-floor,” but you have “*wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” You know from our lessons on the 2nd Article how Jesus humiliated Himself for our sakes in His sufferings and death. You also know how Jesus was exalted, raised from the dead and ascended to heaven. But one step of His exaltation remains; Jesus has not yet come to judge the living and the dead. You will have to wait.

But you also wait expectantly, because it will be a day not of your works, but a day of mercy. Jesus will return in judgment, but for those who have this most holy faith, Jesus will come in mercy. He will not want to hear excuses for your sin. He will not want to see a demonstration of your karate skills. He won’t even

want you to read an essay for the rest of us. He will want to know why you should be allowed into heaven. By this most holy faith alone, you will trust His mercy and tell Him, "I belong in heaven because you took away my sins. You lived and died for me."

This is why you will come to communion. You belong at the table because He mercifully and lovingly invites you. He took away your sins. He lived and died for you. You understand this and many other things about your faith, and you are determined to continue in it.

The results are eternal. They are never ending. You have the faith. You have the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who has created you and redeemed you and sanctified you.

So pull out your Bible from time to time. Do not let your catechism gather dust on the shelf. Review it. Build on it. Memorize a little more. Keep praying. Keep in God's love. Continue waiting expectantly, for this is how the Lord builds His Church. Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.