

Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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April 2, 2006
5th Sunday in Lent
Examination of Confirmation Class
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 143
Second Lesson: Hebrews 5:7-9
Gospel: John 12:20-33

Christ Our Life Living For Christ

This morning in place of the sermon we have the examination of this year's confirmation class. We use the word "Examination", but it is not a test to see whether or not they will be confirmed. Unless they all went out the door and didn't come into the front of the church, they will all be confirmed next Sunday. The term "Examination" is used as a way of examining the children to show the Congregation that they are united in faith with our Congregation. I am convinced that these children know the truth of God's Word and all the questions that I am going to ask them. They might not be able to spit the words out today, but then again, neither would most of you if you were sitting out front looking at all of you guys.

We do this in our regular Sunday service for a number of reasons: (1) so that you can see that I am still teaching the truth of the Words of God and that I am not teaching false doctrine; (2) so that you can see, as I just said, that they are united in faith with this Congregation; and (3) so that you can review some of these truths of Scripture. There is an outline that we will follow that is divided into two sections. The first section deals with Christ Our Life or God Our Life—who God is and what God has done for us. We start out talking about what God tells us about himself. We will start out talking about the natural knowledge of God—how everyone can know there is a God.

Pastor: There are two ways everyone can know there is a God. Keith, would you like to tell me what those two ways are?

Keith: Nature and conscience.

Pastor: What do you mean by nature? How can everyone know there is a God from nature?

Keith: By what he created.

Pastor: Okay, by what he created. What is the weakness of this kind of knowledge about God, Benjamin?

Ben: We don't know who the true God is and we don't know who our Savior is.

Pastor: Okay, that is what natural knowledge of God can never tell us. So God has to reveal himself. Who does he reveal himself through, Courtney?

Courtney: Through Jesus and the Bible.

Pastor: Okay, through Jesus. If you want to know what God is like you can look at Jesus and you can find that in the Bible. The Bible tells us that God is one God—"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one"—and yet it talks about him as having three distinct persons. We call that the Triune God. Can you give me a passage that talks about God as having three persons, Tyler?

Tyler: Matthew 28:19—go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor: Okay. Every week we talk about who God is and what he has done for us when we use the Creed. Travis, what is a Creed?

Travis: A Creed is a statement of belief.

Pastor: Okay. A statement of what we believe. We are going to look at the rest of the time this morning the Apostles Creed, the one we use most often in worship. Evan, the First Article of the Apostles Creed—who is it about?

Evan: God the Father.

Pastor: Give me a one-word description of his work.

Evan: Creator.

Pastor: Okay, the Creator. How did God create all things, Benjamin?

Ben: Out of nothing by his Almighty Word in six 24-hour days.

Pastor: When you say by his Almighty Word, what do you mean?

Ben: He said, "Let there be light" and there was light.

Pastor: Okay. He just said it and it happened. Except for what? What didn't he create by just saying "Let there be" Ben?

Ben: Humans.

Pastor: Mankind. He made mankind differently. In fact, he gave mankind a couple of things that separated them from the rest of creation. Do you remember what those two things are, Courtney?

Courtney: He made humans to rule over all creatures.

Pastor: Okay, he gave authority over all the other creatures. And what is the other thing that sets us apart?

Courtney: He made them in his own image. God's image.

Pastor: What does that mean? His own image?

Courtney: That they were perfect, without sin.

Pastor: They were what?

Courtney: Perfect.

Pastor: Perfect. Okay, they were perfect. They were holy. Okay, sure. When God got done creating the world, he said that the world was perfect, right? It was very good. If God created a perfect world, Travis, why do we need a Savior from sin?

Travis: Because Adam and Eve sinned from eating from the Tree of Life which God told him not to eat from.

Pastor: From which tree did they eat from?

Travis: The tree...

Pastor: The Knowledge of Good and Evil, right?

Travis: Yes.

Pastor: Then he kicked them out so they couldn't eat from the Tree of Life. So that would have been a problem. Okay. The result of the fall into sin—Tyler, what are some of the results of the fall into sin?

Tyler: We deserve God's punishment. All nature lost perfection. We suffer pain and sadness. We are born sinful. We have actual sin.

Pastor: We suffer pain and sadness. What do you mean by that? You have to sit in front of church and answer questions?

Tyler: No.

Pastor: Okay, then what do you mean by pain and sadness?

Tyler: If your loved one dies and you are really sad.

Pastor: Yes. Death is part of the world so that sadness comes. Okay, good. God didn't leave mankind in a sinful world. He said he would send a Savior and then he did send that Savior. We learn about that Savior in the Second Article. Courtney, what would you tell me about Jesus if I asked you what Jesus is like? What would you say from the Second Article?

Courtney: I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

Pastor: Okay, what does that mean, all that stuff she just said, Benjamin?

Ben: I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.

Pastor: Tim, did your brother forget anything?

Tim: No.

Pastor: You're sure? You were listening?

Tim: Yes.

Pastor: Okay. Ben just told us that Jesus was true man, born of the virgin Mary, and also true God, begotten of the Father from eternity. Why did he have to be true man, Evan?

Evan: To live under the Law and to die in our place.

Pastor: He had to live under the Law and die in our place. Why did he have to be true God, Evan?

Evan: So he could be perfect and for his death to count for everybody.

Pastor: He had to be true God so that his death could count for everyone. If he was only true man, who only would be in heaven?

Evan: Himself.

Pastor: Just himself because it wouldn't count for the rest of us. He had to be true God so that his life and death would count for everyone. Keith, give me a passage that talks about Jesus as true God and true man.

Keith: Colossians 2:9—For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form.

Pastor: I didn't hear you say God in there once. Where did you say that he is true God in there?

Keith: I said Christ.

Pastor: In Christ all the fullness of what?

Keith: Deity.

Pastor: Deity—that is the word that means God. Okay, good. Redeem. We talk about Jesus as our Redeemer. If the Father is the Creator, Jesus is the Redeemer. Redeem means to “buy back”. What did Jesus buy us back from, Travis?

Travis: Sin, death and the power of the devil.

Pastor: He bought me back from sin. How did he do that? I still sin. What did he buy me back from when it comes to sin? Even though I still sin now what do I know when I look to God? What will God do with my sins?

Travis: Take them away.

Pastor: Yes. He will forgive them. So the guilt of my sin is what he has taken away and what he has bought me back from. What did he redeem me for, Tyler?

Tyler: So we could serve him and so he could give us heaven.

Pastor: Okay. So we could serve him in this world and then he would give us heaven in the world to come. We talk about Jesus' work as God's Great Exchange. Courtney, what exchange takes place? What did we give to Jesus?

Courtney: Our sin.

Pastor: What did Jesus give to us?

Courtney: Holiness.

Pastor: Now prove that to me from the Bible.

Courtney: 2 Corinthians 5:21—God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Pastor: Okay, good. We become the righteousness or perfection of God. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, the Third Article, is the one who gives us the gift of faith. Why does the Holy Spirit have to give it to us, Ben? Why can't we come to faith on our own?

Ben: Because we are spiritually dead.

Pastor: Prove it.

Ben: Ephesians 2:1—As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.

Pastor: And if we are dead, what does that mean, Evan? Dead. What is dead?

Evan: Unable to move.

Pastor: Yes, we are powerless, right? So can we play any role in coming to faith?

Evan: No.

Pastor: Can we earn heaven by what we do?

Evan: No.

Pastor: Why not?

Evan: Because we are dead.

Pastor: So we can't do anything that pleases God if we are spiritually dead, is that what you are telling me?

Evan: Yes.

Pastor: Good, because you are correct. The Holy Christian Church—Keith, tell me what that is. What is the Holy Christian Church? In the Third Article we say, I believe in the Holy Christian Church. What do you mean when you say that every week?

Keith: All believers everywhere.

Pastor: The Holy Christian Church is all believers everywhere. Well, what do you mean by everywhere?

Keith: Throughout the whole world that believe in Jesus.

Pastor: Okay, throughout the whole world. And where else?

Keith: And in heaven.

Pastor: And in heaven, the saints in heaven and the saints below. What is a Christian Congregation, Tyler?

Tyler: People who gather around the Gospel.

Pastor: Okay, it is like this. Where people come together to gather around the Gospel and the Word and Sacrament. Now, Courtney, tell me the difference between the Holy Christian Church and a Christian Congregation.

Courtney: The Holy Christian Church doesn't have hypocrites, but a Christian Congregation has hypocrites.

Pastor: Okay, hypocrites, that is a big word. What is a hypocrite?

Courtney: A person who says that he believes in God, but he really doesn't.

Pastor: Okay, so which one has hypocrites?

Courtney: The Holy Christian Church. The Holy Christian Church is not visible but the Holy Christian Congregation is visible.

Pastor: Why is the Holy Christian Church not visible?

Courtney: Because we can't see into other people's hearts.

Pastor: Yes. We can't see who the believers are. The Holy Spirit works in our heart and gives us the gift of faith through the means of grace, the means by which he brings us his grace. What are the means of grace, Tyler?

Tyler: The Gospel and Word and Sacrament.

Pastor: Okay, the Word is what we are going to focus on now for a little bit—the Bible. Ben, what is the Bible?

Ben: The Bible is God's inherent and inspired Word.

Pastor: Yes. There are a couple of big words. What does inherent mean?

Ben: No errors.

Pastor: Okay, what does inspired mean?

Ben: God breathed into the writers what to say.

Pastor: Okay. Inspired means literally breathed into, but what do you mean? He breathed into them?

Ben: He told them the thoughts and words to put down.

Pastor: Okay, the thoughts, the words and ideas to put down. Prove that to me Evan.

Evan: 2 Peter 1:21—Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Pastor: Okay. Courtney, what are the two main teachings of the Bible?

Courtney: Law and Gospel.

Pastor: Courtney, what are the two main parts of the Bible.

Courtney: Word and Sacrament.

Pastor: That's the two parts of the means of grace. What are the two parts of the Bible?

Courtney: Old Testament and New Testament.

Pastor: Old Testament and New Testament. Which one has Law and which one has Gospel? Ben.

Ben: They both have Law and Gospel.

Pastor: Are you sure?

Ben: Yes.

Pastor: Positive?

Ben: Yes.

Pastor: You don't want to rethink that?

Ben: No.

Pastor: Good. Books of the Bible. Tyler, you look like you want to tell me what the Old Testament Books of the Bible are.

Tyler: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

Pastor: Mom, did he forget anything?

Jodi: No.

Pastor: You're sure?

Jodi: Yes.

Pastor: You're right. Okay, someone before told me the means of grace. Was that you Tyler?—told me the Gospel and Word and Sacrament, right? Keith, what did he mean when he said a Sacrament? What is a Sacrament?

Keith: A sacred act started by Jesus. Visible elements connected with the Word of God.

Pastor: Visible elements—what do you mean? Visible elements?

Keith: In Holy Communion, bread and wine.

Pastor: Okay, things we can see, like bread and wine in Communion. Okay, keep going.

Keith: And gives the forgiveness of sins.

Pastor: It does? It actually gives the forgiveness of sins? Is that what you are saying?

Keith: Yes.

Pastor: So this morning sins were forgiven when Rachael was baptized?

Keith: Yes.

Pastor: You're sure?

Keith: Yes.

Pastor: Okay. What is baptism, Benjamin?

Ben: Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water used by God's command and connected with God's Word.

Pastor: What is that Word of God?

Ben: Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Pastor: Evan, what is Communion?

Evan: It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ for us Christians to eat and to drink.

Pastor: Where is that written?

Evan: The holy evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the apostle Paul tell us: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new

covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Pastor: Evan, where did you and Ben get those words you just said from?

Evan: The Catechism.

Pastor: Luther’s Small Catechism. When you come to the Lord’s Supper after you are confirmed now, Travis, what will you be eating and drinking?

Travis: The bread and wine.

Pastor: Okay, is that it?

Travis: And the body and blood.

Pastor: Yes, the body and blood of Christ that is in, with and under the bread and the wine. Baptism is for all nations—make disciples of all nations—who is the Lord’s Supper for, Courtney?

Courtney: All people who can remember the Lord’s death and who can examine themselves.

Pastor: Okay, and they examine themselves to...

Courtney: To grow in faith.

Pastor: Okay, grow in faith. They repent of their sins. So repentant disciples, believers who can do the things that you said. In the Lord’s Supper there is a couple of closeness. We talk about close Communion. Who are we close to this way, Tyler, horizontally? Who are we close to when we commune?

Tyler: Fellow believers.

Pastor: Why are we close to them?

Tyler: Because they are here with us.

Pastor: And what are we confessing when we commune together?

Tyler: That we believe that this is the true body and blood of our Lord.

Pastor: Yes. We are one in faith with them. Who are we close to this way, Tyler? (Vertically)

Tyler: Jesus.

Pastor: How are we close to him?

Tyler: Through prayer.

Pastor: In the Lord's Supper though, how are we close to him? What do we receive?

Tyler: His body and blood.

Pastor: Yes, his body and blood. That is why we are close to him. How often should we receive the Lord's Supper, Keith? In general.

Keith: As often as we can and are able to examine ourselves.

Pastor: Okay, as often as we are properly prepared to. Why would we want to receive it often?

Keith: It gives the forgiveness of sins.

Pastor: And where there is forgiveness of sins, what does that do to our faith?

Keith: It strengthens it.

Pastor: Yes. As we remember his death and as we reflect on it. Okay, now it helps to strengthen our faith so that we can live for God. The second part that we want to look at today is Living For God. The gift of faith comes entirely from God. I think, Evan, you told me that we have no role that we play in that, right? Because we are spiritually dead. But after God gives us the gift of faith, he makes us spiritually alive and we can cooperate with the Holy Spirit in a sense in growing in faith. How is that Ben?

Ben: Our faith will be using the means of grace.

Pastor: The more we use the means of grace, then the Spirit—he is still the one that strengthens us—but we have that opportunity to go to his Word and he will strengthen us. Courtney, prove to me that God wants me to grow in my faith.

Courtney: 2 Peter 3:18—grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Pastor: Okay. Evan, if you add prayer to Bible study, it kind of makes it a conversation. How is that?

Evan: Because God is talking to you through the Bible and then when you pray, you are talking to him.

Pastor: Okay, good. Another place to grow is in worship. We come together and gather around the Word and Sacrament like you told me as a Christian Congregation. We gather around the Word and Sacrament. Does God want us to gather together with other Christians around Word and Sacrament, Tyler?

Tyler: Yes.

Pastor: Prove it.

Tyler: Hebrews 10:25—Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Pastor: Okay. Travis, in worship, what are the two high points of worship—the two most important parts of worship in a sense?

Travis: Word and Sacrament.

Pastor: Why are they the high points of worship? Who is doing the work then?

Travis: Jesus is.

Pastor: Yes. He is coming to us and strengthening us, so that is why they are the high points. In the church year, in the festival half, we focus on what Jesus has done for us. Evan, what are the three main festivals of the church year?

Evan: Christmas, Easter and Pentecost.

Pastor: What is Pentecost about?

Evan: The outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor: Okay. We use different colors here in the front of the church during the different seasons of the church year. Right now it is purple. Keith, why is it purple or violet right now? What does that symbolize?

Keith: Repentance.

Pastor: Repentance. And at Easter we will have white. What does that symbolize, Courtney?

Courtney: Joy.

Pastor: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, we had or will have black. Why is it black, Ben?

Ben: To show mourning.

Pastor: What are we mourning over on Good Friday?

Ben: Jesus' death.

Pastor: What are we mourning over on Ash Wednesday?

Ben: Our sins.

Pastor: Yes, our sins. We reflect on our sins. Blue, Evan.

Evan: The grace and hope of heaven.

Pastor: When do we use blue paraments?

Evan: Advent.

Pastor: Okay, during Advent, sure. Red. What does that symbolize, Tyler?

Tyler: The fire of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor: And we use that when? The outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

Tyler: Pentecost.

Pastor: Pentecost and then some of the other minor festivals of the church. When we grow through the Word and Sacrament, then we want to do things that are to God's glory—whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. How do you know what is to God's glory, Courtney?

Courtney: What is out of love for God and according to his will.

Pastor: So both, what you do and why you do it. If you want to know what to do, where are you going to look in the Bible to find a brief summary of what God wants us to do and not do, Travis?

Travis: The Ten Commandments.

Pastor: Give me one word to summarize all ten of them.

Travis: Love.

Pastor: Are you sure?

Travis: Yes.

Pastor: You're right. The First Commandment deals with love for what, Courtney?

Courtney: God.

Pastor: Love for God. Second Commandment, Ben?

Ben: Love for God's name.

Pastor: Third Commandment, Tyler?

Tyler: Love for God's Word.

Pastor: Sixth Commandment, Courtney?

Courtney: God's gift of sex and marriage.

Pastor: Tenth Commandment, Evan?

Evan: Love for contentedness.

Pastor: Love for being content. Okay, good. After you guys have studied the Ten Commandments, what is obvious about our lives, Keith?

Keith: That we are sinful and we do not deserve anything from God.

Pastor: We don't deserve anything from God and we are sinful. We sin all the time. Even though God has brought us to faith, we still keep sinning. What is it that we learned, that phrase, for something we want to do after we have sinned, Benjamin?

Ben: Spiritual breathing.

Pastor: Spiritual breathing—in breathing you do what two things, Ben?

Ben: Inhale and exhale.

Pastor: Give me exhale first. In spiritual breathing, what do you exhale?

Ben: Confess our sins. Put it on Jesus. Turn away from that sin.

Pastor: Okay, what do you inhale then? What do you take in?

Ben: Surrender your life to Jesus and begin living a new life for him.

Pastor: Yes, because you trust that you are forgiven. Ministry—what does the word "ministry" mean, Courtney?

Courtney: Service.

Pastor: Service—so a minister is a servant. Who has a Christian ministry to perform?

Courtney: All believers.

Pastor: Are all believers, then, ministers?

Courtney: Yes, because they can tell everybody the Word of God.

Pastor: Because they can serve God and you gave me one example, they can share the Word; they can use their spiritual gifts to serve. Agree or disagree with me—you six young Christians are the church of tomorrow, Tyler.

Tyler: Disagree.

Pastor: You are going to disagree with me, right now in front of the whole church?

Tyler: Yes.

Pastor: Why?

Tyler: Because we are the church of today.

Pastor: How are you the church of today?

Tyler: We all have spiritual gifts we can use to serve God.

Pastor: What can you do?

Tyler: Usher. Tell people about Jesus and what he did for us.

Pastor: Anything else? Whatever gifts you have, whether it is encouraging, telling others, teaching, the things you mentioned—that's good. What is confirmation, Evan?

Evan: It is a ceremony expressing unity of faith with the congregation.

Pastor: What is it not, Travis?

Travis: It is not the end of God's Word.

Pastor: You're sure?

Travis: Yes.

Pastor: It is not the end of studying God's Word?

Travis: Yes.

Pastor: Do you think God has strengthened you guys during the three years that I had you in class? Do you think he has strengthened you during that time?

All: Yes.

Pastor: Do you think he is done?

All: No.

Pastor: So then, what are you going to do? Keep studying God's Word and keep making use of the means of grace. Good, thank you very much!