



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.mzluth.org

March 25, 2007

5th Sunday in Lent

Confirmation Class Examination

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 73

Second Lesson: Philippians 3:8-14

Gospel: Luke 20:9-19

Examination of this Year's Confirmation Class

This morning we have the examination of this year's confirmation class in place of the sermon. Examination is really a misnomer. It's not a test to see whether or not they will get confirmed. I have every confidence that every question I ask these young Christians, they know. Now, whether or not they will be able to get them all out as they look at all of you is another matter, but I know that they know all of these things. So then, why do we do this? Why do we do it in a church service? A lot of churches have gone to doing it on a Thursday night when there are not so many people or some other day of the week. We do it in the Sunday church service, I believe, for three distinct reasons.

One is so that you know for certain that these people are united in faith with the congregation. They have demonstrated their unity in faith by answering these questions. Two is so that all of you review some of the basic truths of Scripture as we ask the questions. And three is so that you make sure your pastor hasn't gone nuts and started teaching false doctrine and strayed away from God's Word. You can see what I am teaching the children. And before you think it is too unfair to put them up in front of the church looking out at all of you, I tell them they have to look at me all the time because if they are looking at me, that blocks out two-thirds of the congregation anyhow.

All that having been said, we will start with the questions. We follow a basic outline. This year I don't have the outline printed for you, but hopefully you can catch it as we go. We start out looking at what God has done for us, or Christ in our life, and then we follow it up with our life in Christ, how we respond to that. So the first main part is Christ our life, what God has done for us, and if we are going to know what God has done for us, we have to start out by looking at how God tells us about himself right?

So now, God let's everyone know, every last person in the world know that there is a God in two distinct and different ways. How does everyone know that there is a God?

Tim: Through nature and conscience.

Pastor: Okay, through nature—when we see someone created everything. Through conscience—it tells us there is a Holy God. That tells us a lot about God, but what doesn't it tell us? What is the weakness of this kind of knowledge of God?

Megan: We don't know who the true God is and we don't know about him.

Pastor: We don't know what about him specifically?

Megan: How he saved us.

Pastor: Yes, how he saved us. Conscience tells us we are sinners. That is a problem. Natural knowledge doesn't tell us how God takes away sin. So now, how does God make himself clearly known to us?

Adam: Through Jesus and the Bible.

Pastor: Exactly right. God reveals himself also as the Triune God. What does that mean when we say that the God of the Bible is the Triune God? What does Triune mean?

Alex: Three persons in one distinctive Godhead.

Pastor: Are you sure it's not the other way around, three gods in one person?

Alex: I'm sure.

Pastor: He's right. Give me a passage that speaks of God that way.

Kris: 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: Father, Son and Holy Spirit—three persons, yet you are baptized into the name of the one God. God tells us what he has done for us. Every week we use a thing called a Creed, one of three Creeds every week. That is a good church word. What in the dickens does the word Creed mean?

Amber: A statement of faith or belief.

Pastor: What do you mean? Put it in your own words. What are you saying when you say the Creed?

Amber: I believe in God the Father.

Pastor: You are saying what you believe about who God is, sure. How did God create all things? The First Article is about God the Father. How did he create all things?

Akaiye: He created it from nothing in six 24-hour days and with his own mighty word and power.

Pastor: Okay. When he got done creating it, what did he say about everything he had created?

Josh: It was perfect.

Pastor: What does that mean?

Josh: There was nothing wrong with it.

Pastor: Yes, nothing wrong with it. That is a good way of putting it. Mankind was a little different than everyone else, how was mankind different?

Adam: They were created in God's image. They were to rule over the other animals.

Pastor: Okay, authority over creation. What does it mean in God's image? Did they look like him?

Adam: They were made perfect without sin.

Pastor: Yes, holy without sin. That is the image of God, sure. Josh, you told me he created everything perfect. Megan, you told me we needed a Savior. How do those two things fit together? Why do we need a Savior if God created everything perfect?

Josh: Adam and Eve fell into sin when tempted by the devil.

Pastor: How does that affect me? I am not Adam or Eve. What is the result of sin?

Josh: We are born with sins. We commit sins every day. Nature lost its perfection and we suffer pain and sadness.

Pastor: All that comes as a result of sin. You said we are born sinful. Does that kind of sin condemn us to hell?

Megan: Yes.

Pastor: Are you sure?

Megan: Yes.

Pastor: Even if I haven't done anything?

Megan: Yes.

Pastor: Okay, but like Josh said, we commit sins all the time because we are sinners. So what did God promise and do for sinful mankind?

Kris: Send a Savior.

Pastor: Okay, he promised and sent a Savior. The Savior we learn about in the Second Article, tell me, what is the Second Article of the Apostles Creed?

Alex: 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 did Luther write to answer the question, what does this mean? Tell me what Alex said. What does it mean? How did Luther answer that question?

Akaiye: I believe in 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 sins, from death, and the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and 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: Okay. Akaiye just told us that Jesus is true man. Why did he have to be true man?

Kris: To live under the law and die for us.

Pastor: Okay, in our place right? Live under the law in our place and die in our place. Why did he have to be true God? Akaiye also said he is true God.

Tim: So that his death would count for everyone.

Pastor: If he was a man, wouldn't it count for everyone?

Tim: No.

Pastor: Why not?

Tim: Because.

Pastor: You know, when I say "because" to you to pick up the house, that doesn't work at home. Remember what it says in the Book of Psalms? Can any man redeem the life of another? Remember it says no payment is ever enough. That is why he has to be true God. Because if he is just true man, who is the only person in heaven?

Tim: Jesus.

Pastor: Just him, right? Because then he would have been perfect. God and man, give me a passage that speaks of Jesus in that way—that he is true God and true man. Prove to me that is what he is.

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

Pastor: Okay. What does redeem mean?

Alex: To buy back or set free.

Pastor: To buy back or to set free. What has Jesus bought me back from?

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

Pastor: Okay, he has bought me back from that. What has he bought me back for so I can do what?

Adam: To serve God.

Pastor: To serve him in this world and also he has bought me back for what that is coming?

Adam: Eternal life.

Pastor: Eternal life—a perfect life with God in heaven. We often speak of Jesus' work as God's Great Exchange. What did we receive from Jesus?

Amber: Holiness.

Pastor: And what did Jesus receive from us?

Amber: Sin.

Pastor: Our sins, right, they were put on Jesus. Now give me a passage that speaks of that.

Tim: 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: What is every last one of us like by nature?

Megan: Dead in sin.

Pastor: Prove it.

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

Pastor: Since that is true, what part do we play in coming to faith?

Josh: None.

Pastor: Can we earn God's love?

Josh: No.

Pastor: Can we decide to believe in God by ourselves?

Josh: No.

Pastor: Why not?

Josh: Because we are dead spiritually.

Pastor: If I am spiritually dead, what does that mean I am?

Josh: Dead.

Pastor: Dead means dead, yes, you got me there. Did you ever play fetch with a dead dog?

Josh: No.

Pastor: Why not?

Josh: Can't move.

Pastor: Can't move. It's powerless, right? If I am spiritually dead, I am powerless. I can't move toward God. God has to come to me. What is the holy Christian church?

Adam: All believers everywhere.

Pastor: What is a visible congregation?

Kris: People coming around the Word.

Pastor: People coming around the Word and?

Kris: Sacraments.

Pastor: Word and Sacraments. What is the difference between the two?

Akaiye: A Christian congregation is visible and you can see it. The holy Christian church is invisible.

Pastor: Why is it invisible?

Akaiye: Because you can't see in the hearts of others.

Pastor: That is where faith lives. What else can you find in the visible church that you won't find in the holy Christian church?

Akaiye: Hypocrites.

Pastor: What is a hypocrite?

Akaiye: A person who says they believe in God and they really don't.

Pastor: Okay, a person who claims to believe, but they really don't. Good. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the gift of faith and he works through certain means—the means of grace we call it—the instruments by which he brings us his grace. What are the means of grace?

Amber: Holy Communion and Baptism.

Pastor: Okay, that is the Sacraments, and what else besides the Sacraments is a part of the means of grace? What else does the Spirit use to strengthen our faith besides the Sacraments?

Amber: The Word.

Pastor: The Word—the gospel in the Word and in the Sacraments. Let's talk a little bit about the Bible. What is the Bible?

Josh: The inspired and inerrant Word of God?

Pastor: What does inerrant mean? That is a big word.

Josh: It has no errors in it.

Pastor: Okay. It is completely perfect. You said it is the Word of God. What do we mean when we say it is inspired?

Megan: That God told the disciples what to write.

Pastor: Give me a passage that tells me that.

Adam: For prophecy never has its origin in the will of man, but man spoke of God's Word as he was carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Pastor: Where is that written? Is that what you are having trouble remembering?

Adam: Yes.

Pastor: Okay. Anyone know?

Tim: 2 Peter 1:21.

Pastor: Okay, 2 Peter 1:21, good. Two main teachings of the Bible?

Alex: The law and gospel.

Pastor: What are the two main parts of the Bible?

Alex: The New and Old Testament.

Pastor: Old and New Testament. Which one has the law in it and which one has the gospel in it?

Megan: Both the Old and New Testament have both law and gospel.

Pastor: Yes. Both law and gospel is in both of them. What is the purpose of the law?

Kris: To show our sins and need of a Savior.

Pastor: What is the purpose of the gospel?

Akaiye: To show us our Savior.

Pastor: Instead of reciting all the Books of the Bible, just give me the Major Prophets.

Josh: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel.

Pastor: Why are they called Major Prophets?

Josh: They are the biggest prophetic books.

Pastor: They are the longer ones. That is why they are called the Major Prophets. The Minor Prophets are the short ones at the end of the Old Testament. Let's take a look now a little bit at the Sacraments. What is a Sacrament? Give me the definition of what a Sacrament is.

Kris: It is instituted by Christ. It is a visible element connected to God's Word.

Pastor: Okay, and what does it do for us?

Kris: Gives forgiveness of sins.

Pastor: Does it actually give the forgiveness of sins or does it just symbolize how our sins are forgiven?

Kris: It does.

Pastor: It actually gives us the forgiveness of sins. That is what makes it a Sacrament. That is the key part of our definition. Amber, you told me before the two Sacraments right?—the Lord's Supper and Holy Communion? Those are the two Sacraments, right? Did you listen to what I said? I said the same thing twice. What are the two Sacraments?

Amber: The Holy Communion and Baptism.

Pastor: Yes. I said Lord's Supper and Holy Communion. Did you notice that? What is Baptism? How did Luther answer that question?

Megan: 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?

Megan: 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: What is Communion? How did Luther answer that question?

Josh: 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: Okay. When you come to the Lord's Supper—Maundy Thursday will be the first time you come to the Lord's Supper, right? What are you going to eat there?

Alex: Bread and wine and Christ's body and blood.

Pastor: Okay. How can the body and blood be present with the bread and the wine?

Akaiye: It's not explained but it is what the Bible teaches.

Pastor: Okay, it doesn't tell us how it does it. It just tells us that it is there. You're right. Baptism was for all nations. Who is the Lord's Supper for?

Tim: It is for repentant believers who are able to examine themselves properly and remember the Lord's death.

Pastor: Okay. We talk about in Communion that there is a closeness; we talk about close Communion. Who are we close to vertically?

Kris: God.

Pastor: How are we close to God that way? Why are we close to Jesus when we receive the Lord's Supper?

Kris: Because we are receiving his body and blood.

Pastor: Who are we close to horizontally?

Megan: Our fellow Christians.

Pastor: How are we close to them?

Megan: We are united in faith with them.

Pastor: When we commune together we are expressing a unity in faith. Now if we want to live for Christ, we need to be strengthened so that we can do that. Josh, you told me that we play no part in coming to faith, right? After I am a believer, how can I cooperate with the Holy Spirit in growing in faith?

Josh: By making faithful use of the means of grace.

Pastor: Who makes me grow in faith?

Josh: The Holy Spirit.

Pastor: So how am I cooperating?

Josh: You are putting yourself in a position so he can strengthen your faith.

Pastor: Yes, if you don't use Word and Sacrament, you can't strengthen your faith. Good. Give me a passage that tells me God wants us to grow in faith.

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

Pastor: Good. God wants us to grow in grace and knowledge. You grow in grace as you study the Word. That is one of the ways. In the Bible, there are certain chapters that are good to study. 1 Corinthians 10-11, why is that a good one to study?

Megan: It talks about the Lord's Supper.

Pastor: 1 Corinthians 15—why is that a good one to study?

Akaiye: It tells us about Christ's resurrection.

Pastor: It tells us about the resurrection of the dead, sure. Genesis 3—why is that a good one to study?

Adam: The fall into sin.

Pastor: It tells us about the fall into sin. Good. Another place to grow in faith is in worship. Does God want us to worship with other Christians?

Alex: Yes.

Pastor: Prove it. What is the passage that tells us that—that garden passage? Remember the one we look at all the time and I tell you it has rows of “lettuce” in it? It starts out “let us”—let us do what?

Alex: Let us not stop meeting together as some are in the habit of doing.

Pastor: Instead, let us do what? Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us do what?

Alex: Encourage each other.

Pastor: And all the more as you see the day approaching. That is Hebrews 10:25. Good. High points of worship—what are they?

Amber: Word and Sacrament.

Pastor: Why is it the high point?

Megan: Because God comes to us.

Pastor: God comes to us with his blessings. Two main parts of the church year?

Josh: The festival half and the non-festival half.

Pastor: The festival half deals with what?

Josh: The life of Christ.

Pastor: The non-festival half deals with what?

Josh: Our life in Christ.

Pastor: Kind of like the outline we are following today, just like the church year. During the church year we change the colors of the paraments, like on the

lector and the pulpit and the altar. Right now it is violet or purple. What does purple symbolize when we use that?

Kris: Repentance.

Pastor: Soon we will change it on Good Friday to black. What does black symbolize?

Akaiye: Darkness and mourning.

Pastor: Mourning, and then on Easter we will change it to white. What does the white symbolize?

Tim: Joy.

Pastor: Joy. Green, we use green at times, too. What does green symbolize?

Megan: Christian growth.

Pastor: And red, we use that sometimes too. What does that symbolize?

Amber: The fire of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor: Blue, we use that in Advent. What does that symbolize?

Kris: The hope of heaven.

Pastor: God's grace and the hope of heaven. What is the goal of every Christian? When he wakes up in the morning, what is his goal for the day?

Adam: To serve God faithfully.

Pastor: To serve God faithfully and glorify him. Give me a passage that tells me that.

Adam: So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Pastor: Okay. 1 Corinthians 10:31, you bet. Let's say my son, Tim, gets an answer wrong. So I come up there and start beating him. Is that to God's glory? I'm doing it because I love God. Is that to God's glory?

Josh: No.

Pastor: Why not?

Josh: It's not done out of love for him and according to his will.

Pastor: It's not according to his will. His will says don't hurt or harm someone in their body, right? To God's glory is something that is done out of love for him and according to his will. Where do we find his will in a very brief form?

Amber: The Ten Commandments.

Pastor: The Ten Commandments. Give me a one-word summary of all Ten Commandments. Boil them down to one word.

Amber: Love.

Pastor: You're sure?

Amber: Yes.

Pastor: Okay, what are the two tables of the Ten Commandments? The first table deals with love for whom?

Amber: God.

Pastor: And the second table deals with love for whom?

Amber: Our fellow man.

Pastor: Yes. Can obeying the Ten Commandments get me to heaven?

Megan: No.

Pastor: So why bother doing them?

Megan: To thank God for saving us from our sins.

Pastor: To thank God that he has taken away our sins. After you study the Ten Commandments, what is obvious about your life, my life and the life of everyone else here?

Josh: We are all sinful.

Pastor: We are sinners who deserve damnation. We learned about something called spiritual breathing—what we want to do when we sin. You exhale and then you inhale. What do you want to exhale? What do you want to get rid of every time you sin?

Kris: Our sins.

Pastor: How do you do that? What are the two steps in exhaling?

Kris: Place them on Jesus.

Pastor: Okay, confess your sin and place it on Jesus. What do you want to inhale? What do you take in after you have exhaled?

Akaiye: You trust its forgiven and you thankfully begin to serve God again.

Pastor: Okay, trust that it is forgiven and thankfully begin to serve God. What does the word ministry mean? That is a good church word. What does ministry mean?

Adam: A service.

Pastor: Service in God's name; service for God. Who has a ministry to perform?

Alex: All believers.

Pastor: Every last one of them?

Alex: Yes.

Pastor: What do you think of this statement? I hear this, you will hear this—you are the church of tomorrow? What do you think of that statement?

Josh: it's wrong because we are the church of today.

Pastor: Why are you the church of today?

Josh: All believers have gifts they can use.

Pastor: So you are telling me that you have gifts you can use to serve God right now?

Josh: Yes.

Pastor: What are they? What can you do right now to serve God?

Josh: Help around the church.

Pastor: Sure, you can help. What else can you do? What can you do with the gospel?

Josh: Preach it.

Pastor: Yes, share it with others. You are the church of today. What is confirmation?

Megan: A public ceremony that shows our unity in faith with other Christians.

Pastor: What is confirmation not?

Tim: An end to learning his Word.

Pastor: You're sure? Next week, you're all done with this? You don't have to do this any more? You are going to hear people say that to you next week and even today. It's all over.

Tim: It's not all over.

Pastor: You're sure?

Tim: Yes.

Pastor: Yes. God wants us to grow, continually grow. Has God strengthened you in the years that you have been in confirmation class?

All: Yes.

Pastor: Do you think he is done?

All: No.