



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.mzluth.org

March 9, 2008

5th Sunday in Lent

Examination of Confirmation Class

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 116

Second Lesson: Romans 8:11-19

Gospel: John 11:17-27, 38-45

Christ Our Life – Our Life in Christ

This morning in the place of our sermon, we have the public examination of this year's Confirmation class. "Examination" might be a misleading word. This isn't a test to see whether or not they are confirmed. It's public examination so that you can see that they have been instructed in the truth of God's Word, so that you can see that they are one with you in faith as members of this congregation. We do it publicly in the service on a Sunday, not because I don't want to preach, I love to preach. It's actually easier to preach than to get these guys not to throw up on me as we go through this. But we do it in the public service so that you can see that they are one with you in faith, so that you can review the basic doctrines of Christianity, and so that you can make sure your pastor hasn't started teaching your children false doctrine. That's why we do it in the worship service on a Sunday morning.

I have every confidence they know all the things I am going to ask them. Whether or not they get the words out, that I'm not certain of, but I know they know it and I want them to be able to show you that they know it. It's not about making it hard for them. It's about enabling them to confess their faith, right? It should not be scary, but it should be a joy.

In the place in the service folder where I usually put the theme and parts, I have a very brief outline of what we are going to go through. The first section we are going to look at is who God is, what God tells us about himself—Christ our Life. We will look at what God tells us about himself, what God has done for us, and then how God works in us through the means of grace. Then we will go on to Our Life in Christ.

Pastor: Bethany, God tells everyone in the world about himself in two ways. What are the two ways he lets everyone in the world know that he exists?

Bethany: Nature and conscience.

Pastor: "Conscience," what does that mean? That's a fancy word.

Bethany: What we believe in our mind.

Pastor: What the voice inside of us tells is right or wrong, right? That's conscience. Everyone has that. But what is the weakness of this natural knowledge of God, Brittany?

Brittany: It doesn't tell us who our true Savior is or our true Creator.

Pastor: So then God has to make himself known so that we know him. Summer, how does God make himself known to us so that we know who the true God is and who our Savior is?

Summer: The Gospel and Word and Sacrament.

Pastor: Who does the Gospel and Word and Sacrament focus upon?

Summer: God.

Pastor: Specifically who?

Summer: Jesus.

Pastor: Jesus, as God, came to earth in flesh to live and die for us. God reveals himself also as the Triune God. Kathy, tell me what "Triune" means?

Kathy: Three persons in one Godhead.

Pastor: Are you sure it's not the other way around?

Kathy: Positive.

Pastor: Okay, give me a passage that proves what you just said to me.

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

Pastor: That was good. We had that one in the baptism service this morning, right? God tells us what he has done for us. Becca, each week we confess what God has done for us with the Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed or the Athanasian Creed. What does that word "Creed" mean?

Becca: A statement of belief.

Pastor: We are saying what we believe about God. Let's talk about the Apostle's Creed. That is the one we are going to focus on. Summer, who is the First Article of the Apostle's Creed about?

Summer: God the Father.

Pastor: A one-word summary of his work?

Summer: Creator.

Pastor: Who is the Second Article of the Apostle's Creed about?

Summer: God the Son.

Pastor: And a one-word summary of his work? What did Jesus do for us?

Summer: He died on the cross.

Pastor: He redeemed us through his death on the cross. Go back to Creation now. Brittany, how did God create all things?

Brittany: In six 24-hour days with his almighty word and perfectly.

Pastor: What was there before he created it?

Brittany: Out of nothing.

Pastor: There was nothing at all there. You just told me he created it perfectly, right? That included mankind. Kathy, how was mankind different from all the other things God created?

Kathy: He had authority over all the other creatures and he was in God's image.

Pastor: What does "God's image" mean? Did he look like God?

Kathy: He was perfect.

Pastor: Perfect, holy, without sin and knew God's will perfectly. Brittany, you told me God created everything perfectly, right? Summer told me Jesus saved us from our sins, right? If God created everything perfectly, why do we need a Savior, or was Summer mistaken earlier and I should have corrected her?

Brittany: Because Adam and Eve fell into sin.

Pastor: How did they fall into sin?

Brittany: By sinning.

Pastor: Get a little more specific, would you please?

Brittany: The devil tempted them.

Pastor: Yes, the devil—whose fault was it then; the devil's or Adam and Eve's?

Brittany: Adam and Eve.

Pastor: Yes, it was Adam and Eve's fault, but the devil tempted them and they fell into sin. They had the ability not to sin, but they also had the ability to sin.

Sin came into the world. Tell me, Bethany, what are the results of sin in the world?

Bethany: We commit sins against God. We suffer pain and sadness. We are born in a sinful condition. And we deserve God's punishment and death.

Pastor: What do you mean "deserve God's punishment and death?"

Bethany: We deserve to go to hell.

Pastor: Yes. So what did God promise and do for sinful mankind, Summer?

Summer: Send a Savior.

Pastor: He promised and sent a Savior. Brittany, breath in between the sentences, but recite the Second Article for me, would you?

Brittany: 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, death and - is this the wrong part?

Pastor: You've given me the explanation first, but keep going, you're on a roll.

Brittany: 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, now do you want to tell me what it means?

Brittany: 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, death and the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death. All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom and serve him with everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.

Pastor: Okay, now breathe. You guys think I talk fast when I preach, huh? Very good, Brittany! You told me in there that Jesus Christ is true man, born of the virgin Mary, right? Becca, why did he have to be true man?

Becca: So he could live under the law in our place.

Pastor: He could live under the law in our place and also do what in our place?

Becca: Die in our place.

Pastor: Kathy, why did he have to be true God? She also said he was true God.

Kathy: So his suffering and death would count for everyone.

Pastor: Yes, so it would count for everyone. If he is not true God, it doesn't count for everyone. It only counts for himself. Bethany, give me a passage that speaks of Jesus as true God and true man.

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

Pastor: I didn't hear "God." Where is "God" in there?

Bethany: The Deity.

Pastor: And where is man?

Bethany: In the bodily form.

Pastor: It speaks of him as true God and as true man. Summer, what does the word "redeemed" mean?

Summer: To buy back.

Pastor: What did Jesus buy us back from?

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

Pastor: You still sin. How did he buy you back from sin?

Summer: He died on the cross.

Pastor: Which does what with our sin?

Summer: Puts them on Jesus.

Pastor: Yes, and it takes away the guilt of our sin. That is the sense we are bought back from. Tell me what did he buy you back for, so that you can do what?

Summer: Live a life on earth of serving him and live a perfect life in heaven with him.

Pastor: We will have a perfect life to come and we can serve him now. That is what he has bought us back for. We often speak of this as God's Great Exchange. Brittany, what did Jesus get from us?

Brittany: Our sins.

Pastor: That got put on him. What did we get from him? What was the exchange that came back?

Brittany: His holiness.

Pastor: Becca, give me a passage that talks about that.

Becca: 2nd 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: Yes, that is that Great Exchange that was just described for us. Now let's go to the Third Article. Who is the Third Article about, Summer?

Summer: God the Holy Spirit.

Pastor: God the Holy Spirit, and a one-word description of his work?

Summer: He gives us faith.

Pastor: Yes, he sanctifies us. He sets us apart. He makes us holy. What is everyone like by nature, Kathy?

Kathy: Powerless.

Pastor: Powerless why?

Kathy: Because we are dead.

Pastor: Okay, we are dead in our what?

Kathy: In our transgressions and sins.

Pastor: In our sins. What kind of dead? I'm still breathing. How am I by nature dead if I am still breathing?

Kathy: Spiritually dead.

Pastor: Spiritually dead. Can you give me a passage that talks about us in that way?

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

Pastor: Yes, as for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins. Brittany, if that is true that we are spiritually dead, what role do we play in coming to faith?

Brittany: None.

Pastor: Why not?

Brittany: We can't do anything to give us faith.

Pastor: Why not?

Brittany: Because God does it.

Pastor: Yes, he certainly does it, but why can't we do it? Why can't I invite Christ into my heart?

Brittany: Because we are spiritually dead.

Pastor: If I am spiritually dead, I am powerless. I can't make a decision for him. I can't do anything to bring him to me. Like you said, he has to do it all. In the Third Article we also talk about the Holy Christian Church, right Becca? What is the Holy Christian Church, Summer?

Summer: All believers everywhere.

Pastor: All believers everywhere. What is a local congregation; like this is a congregation, Becca?

Becca: A gathering of people around the Word.

Pastor: Okay, where people come together around the Word and the Sacraments, right? What's the difference between the Holy Christian Church and a Christian congregation, Becca?

Becca: A Christian congregation can have hypocrites.

Pastor: Okay, what is a hypocrite? That's a big word.

Becca: Someone who says something but they do the opposite.

Pastor: In this context, says they are a believer but actually do not believe. Okay, and what is the other difference?

Becca: The Holy Christian Church, you can't see it.

Pastor: Why can't you see it?

Becca: Because we can't see into people's hearts and what they believe.

Pastor: You can't see who truly is a believer. Can you see a Christian congregation?

Becca: Yes.

Pastor: Yes, look around, right? God works in us through the means of grace. Brittany, what does that phrase mean, "means of grace?" What are the means of grace?

Brittany: The Gospel and Word and Sacrament.

Pastor: The Gospel—the good news about Jesus—and the Word and the Sacraments. Let's talk about the Bible for a little bit. What is the Bible, Summer?

Summer: The inspired inerrant Word of God.

Pastor: What do you mean "inerrant?" That's a fancy word.

Summer: It is perfect with no mistakes.

Pastor: Perfect with no mistakes, okay. Summer, what does it mean that it's inspired?

Summer: God gave the writers thoughts, words and ideas.

Pastor: Now, give me a passage that tells me that, Summer.

Summer: Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Pastor: 2 Peter 1:21, okay. Two main teachings of the Bible, Bethany?

Bethany: Law and Gospel.

Pastor: Purpose of the Law, Bethany?

Bethany: To show us our sin and our need for a Savior and to guide us in thankful living.

Pastor: Purpose of the Gospel?

Bethany: To show us our Savior.

Pastor: What is a Sacrament, Brittany?

Brittany: A sacred act started by God and it gives forgiveness of sins.

Pastor: And what does it have connected with the Word?

Brittany: Gospel.

Pastor: The Gospel is there in the Word, but what in a Sacrament is connected together with God's Word?

Brittany: Earthly elements.

Pastor: Yes, like what is the earthly element in baptism that we had this morning?

Brittany: Water.

Pastor: What is the earthly element in the Lord's Supper?

Brittany: Bread and wine.

Pastor: Now, when you come to the Lord's Supper, after you are confirmed, you come to the Lord's Supper, Bethany, what will you eat and drink?

Bethany: Jesus' body and blood and the bread and wine.

Pastor: Four things he tells us. How can all four be there?

Bethany: Because God tells us.

Pastor: Yes, he doesn't explain how. He just says that they are there. Baptism is for all nations we heard this morning in our service. Who is the Lord's Supper for, Kathy?

Kathy: Repentant disciples who can remember Christ's death and who can examine themselves.

Pastor: Okay, repentant disciples, remember his death, examine themselves. How often should we receive the Lord's Supper, Brittany?

Brittany: As often as we are properly prepared.

Pastor: What do you mean "properly prepared?"

Brittany: As often as we can properly examine ourselves.

Pastor: Why? Why receive it often?

Brittany: Because we get forgiveness of sin through it.

Pastor: And God strengthens our faith. Now let's go on to talking about living for Christ, how we live for God. We live for him and he strengthens us so that we can live for him. Talk a little bit about how he strengthens us as we come together in worship and in our own daily lives. We don't cooperate in believing is what we said earlier, but in what sense can we cooperate with the Holy Spirit after we are believers, Bethany?

Bethany: We can make faithful use of the means of the grace.

Pastor: So who does the work in strengthening our faith then?

Bethany: The Holy Spirit.

Pastor: But as we make faithful use of Word and Sacrament, the Spirit has the opportunity to strengthen us. Does God want you to grow in your faith Becca?

Becca: Yes.

Pastor: Prove it.

Becca: Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Pastor: If someone out here wants to find that later today to see if you were right, where would they find it?

Becca: 2 Peter 3:18.

Pastor: You read the Bible to grow in your faith. What would be some good questions to ask yourself, Bethany?

Bethany: What does it say? What does it tell me about God? What does it tell me about myself? And what will we need to do?

Pastor: Okay, some questions about some important chapters in the Bible where you find some important things. What do you find in Genesis 1 and 2, Summer?

Summer: The Creation.

Pastor: What do you find in Genesis 3, Kathy?

Kathy: The fall into sin.

Pastor: Genesis 6, Brittany?

Brittany: The flood.

Pastor: Psalm 23, Becca?

Becca: Christ our good shepherd.

Pastor: Isaiah 53, Bethany?

Bethany: The Messiah's suffering and death.

Pastor: 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, Brittany?

Brittany: The Lord's Supper.

Pastor: 1 Corinthians 15.

Brittany: The Resurrection.

Pastor: Another place to grow in faith is through worship. Does God want us to gather around Word and Sacrament with other Christians, Brittany?

Brittany: Yes.

Pastor: Prove it.

Brittany: 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: What are the high points of worship, Summer?

Summer: The Gospel and Word and Sacrament.

Pastor: Why are those the high points in worship?

Summer: Because God comes to us.

Pastor: The three main festivals of the church year that we use in the church year as we worship; what are the three main festivals?

Summer: Christmas, Easter and Pentecost.

Pastor: What is Pentecost all about?

Summer: Outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor: Okay, birthday of the new church, testament church, outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We use colors in worship, like on the altar and the lectern and the pulpit and all that. Right now we are using violet or purple. What does that symbolize for us, Brittany?

Brittany: Repentance.

Pastor: We use it during Lent. On Easter it will turn to white. What does that symbolize, Kathy?

Kathy: Joy.

Pastor: Green, what does that symbolize, Summer?

Summer: The growth of Christians.

Pastor: Red, Becca?

Becca: The fire of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor: On Good Friday we will have black. What does that symbolize?

Becca: Mourning.

Pastor: Morning like as opposed to evening?

Becca: Sadness.

Pastor: Sadness, grief, mourning, okay. We use blue now in Advent. What does that symbolize, Brittany?

Brittany: The hope of heaven.

Pastor: Yes, the hope of heaven; the confidence of heaven that we have. What is the goal of every Christian, Bethany?

Bethany: To glorify God in all that we do.

Pastor: Prove it.

Bethany: 1 Corinthians 10:31 – So whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Pastor: How do I know what is to God's glory, Brittany?

Brittany: According to God's will.

Pastor: Where do I find his will and also what else? Not only according to his will, but why do I do it?

Brittany: Out of love.

Pastor: Out of love for him. What brief place do I find a summary of his will, Becca?

Becca: The Ten Commandments.

Pastor: Give me one word to summarize all ten, Becca?

Becca: Love.

Pastor: Okay, the First Commandment deals with love for whom, Becca?

Becca: Love for God.

Pastor: Second Commandment?

Bethany: Love for God's name.

Pastor: Third Commandment?

Brittany: Love for God's gift of his Word.

Pastor: Fourth Commandment?

Summer: Love for God's representatives.

Pastor: Fifth Commandment?

Kathy: Love for God's gift of life.

Pastor: Seventh Commandment?

Brittany: Love for God's gift of possessions.

Pastor: Eighth Commandment?

Summer: Love for God's gift of a good name.

Pastor: Ninth and Tenth Commandment?

Bethany: Contentment.

Pastor: Okay, now the Sixth Commandment, the one I skipped and you listened well.

Brittany: Love for God's gift of sex and marriage.

Pastor: Good. Brittany, what is obvious about Brittany after you look at the Ten Commandments?

Brittany: That WE are sinful.

Pastor: What's obvious about BRITTANY, Brittany?

Brittany: That I am sinful.

Pastor: What's obvious about Bethany, Brittany?

Brittany: That she is sinful.

Pastor: What's obvious about all of us?

Brittany: We are all sinful.

Pastor: We are all sinful. We deserve God's punishment. Now, when we do sin, one of the things we want to do is just as natural as breathing – get into this habit of spiritual breathing. Spiritual breathing – you exhale first and then you inhale. What do you exhale?

Bethany: We confess our sins and lay it on Jesus.

Pastor: Then what do we inhale?

Bethany: We trust that we are forgiven and thankfully begin to serve God again.

Pastor: Serve God – another word for serving God?

Summer: Ministry.

Pastor: Who has a ministry to perform, Summer?

Summer: Every Christian.

Pastor: Even you?

Summer: Yes.

Pastor: Are you sure?

Summer: Yes.

Pastor: Every Christian has gifts that they can use. Next week is Confirmation. What is Confirmation, Kathy? What is the ceremony all about?

Kathy: It is a public ceremony that shows that we have strengthened our faith.

Pastor: That you have been strengthened in your faith and what about with the congregation then?

Kathy: Having oneness with the congregation.

Pastor: You are in unity with what we teach and believe. What is Confirmation NOT, Becca?

Becca: An end to growing in faith.

Pastor: Okay, do you guys think God has strengthened you in the time you spent in Confirmation class?

All: Yes.

Pastor: Do you think he is done?

All: No.

Pastor: Thank you very much! You did very well! It wasn't that bad at all, was it?