



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.mzluth.org

March 29, 2009

5th Sunday in Lent

Examination of Confirmation Class

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 115

Second Lesson: Hebrews 5:7-10

Gospel: John 12:20-33

Examination of the Confirmation Class

Christ our life
Living for Christ

In place of our Sermon, we have the examination of this year's Confirmation Class. Examination probably isn't the best word for this I guess you would say. It is examination in the sense of them being examined so they can show you they've been strengthened in faith to confess that faith to be united with this congregation. It's not examination as in the sense of a test to see whether or not they'll be confirmed. I have every confidence that everyone sitting up there knows the questions I am going to ask them. Whether or not they will spit it out correctly or not, that I can't guarantee you, but I can guarantee that they know it. They've been taught it. They know it. They understand it. And I'm convinced they believe it.

A lot of places don't have this on Sunday morning anymore. "It's too nerve wracking for the kids" they say. So they have it on a Saturday night or a Thursday night or some other time when it's just a few of the family members there. I like having it on a Sunday morning for a number of reasons. I want the kids to be able to confess their faith and be comfortable speaking their faith in front of people. That's another reason why I often hear from people afterwards, "It was much tougher when I had it. It was so much harder. I was so scared because it was so hard." What's the point? Why are you trying to make talking about God hard? They believe you are trying to enable them to confess their faith, right? I don't want in their minds what is in some of your minds; "talking about God equals pain in front of other people," right? We want this to be natural. So that's one of the reasons I do it like this.

Another reason is so you guys can review some of these truths that hopefully you knew at one time or another or hopefully still know. Along with that, this year I gave the questions to all the Council members. So if the kids get stuck, they've assured me they'll step in and answer for the kids; right Councilmen?

The last reason why I do this is so you people can see what I am teaching your children and you know that I haven't gone off the deep end and started teaching false doctrine. I think that's also valuable. That's why we do it here in church.

The outline is on the back of the Bulletin. We kind of follow this in general. We look at who God is, how God reveals himself to us, and we look at how we respond to it. That's the basic outline we are going to follow.

That being said, we are going to talk first of all about how God tells us about himself. God tells everyone about himself in two specific ways. Claire, what are those two ways?

Claire: Nature and conscience.

Pastor: Nature tells us God is what, Kyle? When you look at the world that God made, what do you know about God?

Kyle: That he made it all perfect.

Pastor: In order to do that, what must he be?

Kyle: Almighty.

Pastor: He has to be pretty powerful. Conscience, Cassie, tell me what can we know about God and conscience? What is my conscience? Tell me that.

Cassie: Sinful.

Pastor: Our conscience tells us we're sinful because it's that voice inside us that tells us what's right and what's wrong. If I have a powerful God that made this world and he put this voice inside me that tells me when I screw up and do things that are sinful, if that's all I know about God, that's kind of scary because I know I'm sinful. What's the weakness of this natural knowledge of God, nature and conscience? Matt, tell me what's the weakness.

Matt: That it doesn't tell us who the true God is and what he's done for our sins.

Pastor: What do you mean what he's done for our sins?

Matt: It doesn't show us how he forgave them.

Pastor: So God has to make himself more clearly known to us. How does he make himself clearly known to us, Dakota?

Dakota: Through the Bible.

Pastor: Who does the Bible focus on, what one person?

Dakota: Jesus.

Pastor: Yes, he makes himself most clearly known through Jesus in the Bible. We talk about God. We learn about him from the Bible, we talk about him as our Triune God. Aaron, is that word “Triune” in the Bible any place?

Aaron: No?

Pastor: You’re sure? Don’t answer a question with a question or I’ll come up with another one.

Aaron: No, it’s not.

Pastor: You’re right. No it’s not. Just say it boldly. If you’re wrong, you’re wrong, but they won’t know. No, it’s not. Yet it’s a word that we use. It’s a word that we as human beings use so that we can describe the God of the Bible. Kara, what does that mean, “Triune”? That’s a fancy word.

Kara: Three persons in one God-head.

Pastor: You’re sure it’s not the other way around?

Kara: It’s not the other way around.

Pastor: You’re positive?

Kara: Yes.

Pastor: Okay, good. Can you give me a passage that talks about God as three persons, Luke?

Luke: Matthew 28:19 – Therefore 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 – just like what we had this morning in baptism. Every week we come together in worship and in worship every week, except today, we confess our faith using the words of a “Creed.” Jo, what’s a “Creed”?

Jordan: A statement of beliefs or faith.

Pastor: We are going to talk about one of the Creeds. Aaron, which Creed are we going to talk about?

Aaron: The Apostles Creed.

Pastor: Why is it called the Apostles Creed? Did they write it?

Aaron: No.

Pastor: No, it just summarizes what they taught and what they believe. Olivia, the First Article of the Apostles Creed, who is it about?

Olivia: God the Creator.

Pastor: God the Father, and we speak of his work as the Creator. Good, you got it all in one. How did God create everything, Cassie?

Cassie: From his almighty Word, out of nothing, and in six days.

Pastor: How do you know it was six days?

Cassie: Because there was morning and evening.

Pastor: Okay, every day it says morning and evening, so six days like we have today. When he got done creating everything, Matt, what did he say about everything he created?

Matt: It was very good.

Pastor: What does that mean?

Matt: It was perfect.

Pastor: Okay, absolutely perfect. Everything was perfect. Claire, God created mankind differently than everything else. He didn't just say "Let there be man." He made Adam from the dust of the ground. He didn't just say "Let there be Eve." He took the rib out and did all that. He also gave them some other special blessings. What were the two blessings that he gave them?

Claire: God's image and authority to rule over the earth.

Pastor: God's image, so they looked like God, right?

Claire: No, they were perfect like God.

Pastor: Okay, perfect and holy like God. Who told me about the weakness of the natural knowledge of God? Matt, you told me the weakness was it doesn't show us who our Savior is, right? Why do I need a Savior if you told me I was perfect?

Matt: Because Adam and Eve fell into sin by eating from the tree.

Pastor: Why did they do that?

Matt: The devil tempted them.

Pastor: So it's the devil's fault?

Matt: No, it's their fault for giving in to the temptation.

Pastor: Okay, they had the ability not to sin. What about you and me when we are born? Do we have the ability not to sin?

Matt: No because we were born sinful.

Pastor: Yes, we were born sinful. We are going to sin. Five results of the fall into sin, Kara, give me some of them.

Kara: All of nature lost its perfection. We are born with original sin. We sin every day. We deserve God's punishment.

Pastor: What about nature?

Kara: Nature lost its perfection.

Pastor: Okay, we deserve God's punishment. What do you mean by that?

Kara: We deserve to go to hell.

Pastor: That's kind of harsh.

Kara: That's what God says.

Pastor: Okay, that's what God says. That's what we deserve. We deserve to go to hell. Matt, what did God promise and do for sinful mankind?

Matt: He promised to send a Savior and he forgave our sins.

Pastor: Olivia, Luther wrote in the Second Article and explained that beautifully. Give me the Second Article of the Apostles Creed.

Olivia: 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.

I believe in Jesus Christ, true God, begotten from 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 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: Kyle, did she forget anything?

Kyle: No.

Pastor: Were you listening?

Kyle: Yes.

Pastor: Okay. No, she didn't forget anything, I don't think. Very good, Liv thanks. True God, true man you said in there as you spoke about the explanation. Luke, why did he have to be true God and true man? First, why did he have to be true man?

Luke: To live under the Law.

Pastor: Why did he have to be true God?

Luke: To live a perfect life for us.

Pastor: Didn't he have to be true man to live the perfect life under the Law?

Luke: But God's over the Law.

Pastor: But as true God, he had to be true God so that what about his life and death in our place?

Luke: So he could rise from the dead.

Pastor: Well, Lazarus rose from the dead and he was a man, right? He had to be true God so that his life and death would do what for everyone?

Luke: To save them.

Pastor: Okay, so it would count for everyone and save them from their sins so that it wasn't just himself that he was saving by being perfect. Claire, give me a passage that speaks about Jesus as true God and true man.

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

Pastor: Dakota, what does "buy back" mean? What is the church word for "buy back"?

Dakota: Redeemed.

Pastor: Yes, I asked that backwards, didn't I? What did Jesus buy us back from, Aaron?

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

Pastor: Jo, what did he buy us back for? So that we can do what?

Jordan: Serve him thankfully.

Pastor: Okay, that's why we are here on earth. And what else? He also bought us back for what that's coming yet?

Jordan: Heaven.

Pastor: Eternal life with him in heaven. We often speak of Jesus' work as God's Great Exchange. Kyle, what did Jesus receive from us?

Kyle: Our sin.

Pastor: What did we receive from Jesus?

Kyle: Holiness.

Pastor: Can you give me a passage that tells me that?

Kyle: 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: We talked about the First Article and the Second Article. Let's go to the Third Article. Who is the Third Article about, Cassie?

Cassie: The Holy Spirit.

Pastor: The Holy Spirit. One word description of his work?

Cassie: Sanctify.

Pastor: What does that mean? That's a fancy church word.

Cassie: Set apart.

Pastor: He is the one that sets us apart and makes us holy. What is every person like by nature, Kara?

Kara: Sinful.

Pastor: And because we are sinful, what does that make us?

Kara: Dead in our sins.

Pastor: What does that mean? What does dead mean? You're breathing, aren't you?

Kara: We can't choose to come to Jesus or let the Holy Spirit come into our hearts.

Pastor: Why?

Kara: Because we're dead.

Pastor: If you're dead, you're powerless, right? Spiritually, we are dead. We are powerless. We can't play any role in our coming to faith. So then the Holy Spirit works through certain tools or instruments. Dakota, what do we call the tools or instruments he works through?

Dakota: Word and Sacrament.

Pastor: Give me the fancier name for Word and Sacrament.

Dakota: The means of grace.

Pastor: The means of grace, which is the Gospel and Word and Sacrament. The Word, let's talk about the Word. Liv, what's the Bible?

Olivia: The inspired inerrant Word of God.

Pastor: Those are big fancy words. What do they mean? What does inerrant mean?

Olivia: Without errors.

Pastor: It's all true. Everything it says in there is true. Inspired, Cassie, what does inspired mean?

Cassie: The Holy Spirit breathed through the men to write what he wanted them to write.

Pastor: Breathed, CPR, what are you talking about? What do you mean he "breathed" them into them?

Cassie: He told them what he wanted to write.

Pastor: He gave them the thoughts, the words, the ideas to write, and they wrote it in their own style, but it's his word, word for word. That's what it means that the Bible is inspired. A passage that tells me that, Aaron? I told you I didn't write any of the answers on the ceiling. You don't even have to look. If you can't remember the reference, give me the passage. It talks about inspiration, how God breathed into them for prophecy.

Aaron: For 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: Anyone remember the reference?

Jordan: 2 Peter 1:21.

Pastor: Two main teachings of the Bible, Kyle.

Kyle: Law and Gospel.

Pastor: What does the Law tell us about ourselves, Dakota?

Dakota: It shows our sins.

Pastor: Okay, what's the Gospel tell us, Matt?

Matt: Who our Savior is.

Pastor: Dakota, you told me that the means of grace was the Gospel and Word and Sacrament. Kara, define what Sacrament means for me. That's another good church word.

Kara: It is a ceremony instituted by Christ for the forgiveness of sins that ties God's Word to earthly elements.

Pastor: It has earthly elements connected to the Word and like you said, here's key to the definition, it actually forgives our sins. Luke, what are the two Sacraments?

Luke: Baptism and Holy Communion.

Pastor: Let's see if you weren't so nervous that you knew what happened so far this morning. Which of the two have we had so far in church today?

Luke: Baptism.

Pastor: Good. We had baptism, so we heard about baptism as we went through that service, so we are going to talk a little bit more now about the Lord's Supper. Luther answered the question "what is the Sacrament of Holy Communion?" Cassie, what did he write?

Cassie: 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?

Cassie: The holy evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and the apostle Paul, tell us our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, gave thanks and gave it to them saying "Take and eat. This is my body which has been 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 has been given out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me."

Pastor: Did she forget anything, Claire, besides breathing?

Claire: No.

Pastor: Kara, you told me it has visible elements connected with God's Word, right? Dakota, what are the visible or earthly elements of the Lord's Supper? Like in baptism, the visible element would be the water that we used this morning. What is the visible or earthly element in the Lord's Supper?

Dakota: The bread and wine.

Pastor: In the Lord's Supper, when you guys come to the Lord's Supper, what are you going to be eating and drinking, Matt?

Matt: The bread and wine, body and blood.

Pastor: How is the body and blood present there? Can you explain that to me?

Matt: No. The bread and wine is actually Jesus body and blood.

Pastor: You can't explain it to me. When you try to explain it to me, you are going to get into problems. Scripture just says it, so that's what we believe. When it's present, I can't tell you, but it says when you eat and drink, you are going to be eating and drinking what, Matt?

Matt: The body and blood and the bread and wine.

Pastor: Four things, bread and wine, body and blood. Don't try to explain what God hasn't. It will just get you in trouble. Baptism is for all nations. Aaron, who is the Lord's Supper for?

Aaron: Those who can examine themselves and can remember Jesus' death.

Pastor: Those, who are the "those" that you are talking about?

Aaron: Believers.

Pastor: Yes, repentant disciples of Jesus, or believers, who can examine themselves, confess their sins, and can remember his death. We talk about practicing close communion. There are two closeness's that are going on. Kara, who are we close to vertically?

Kara: We are close to Jesus.

Pastor: How are we close to Jesus?

Kara: We are eating his body and blood.

Pastor: Who are we close to horizontally, Cassie?

Cassie: Other people taking it with us.

Pastor: Why are we close to them, just because we are kneeling next to them?

Cassie: Because we are confessing our faith with them.

Pastor: We are confessing that we are one in faith with them, that we are united in faith with them. So there is also that closeness in that direction. Claire, how often should we receive the Lord's Supper?

Claire: As often as possible, if you are properly examined.

Pastor: As long as we properly prepare ourselves. What happens if we don't prepare ourselves properly, Luke?

Luke: We cast judgment on ourselves.

Pastor: We eat and drink to our own judgment if we don't properly examine ourselves. Claire, why do we want to commune often?

Claire: Because it strengthens our faith.

Pastor: Let's talk about how we live for God. If you want to live in your daily life, you have to be strengthened so you can do that, so we are going to talk a little bit first of all as to how we are strengthened. The Holy Spirit is the one who strengthens us. We don't cooperate and come into faith, but after we are a believer, Liv, how can we cooperate with the Holy Spirit?

Olivia: By using the means of grace.

Pastor: Okay, then he works to strength us, but if we don't make use of it, he can't strengthen us. Now give me a passage that tells me God wants me to grow in faith, Jo.

Jordan: 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: That tells me he wants me to worship with other Christians so that we can encourage them, and that's one of the places that we do grow in faith, but where is the one where he tells us to grow in faith?

Jordan: 2 Peter 3:18 - But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Pastor: Any other passages you want to share with us as long as you're going?

Jordan: No.

Pastor: You read the Bible and in order to get more out of the Bible, you should ask yourself questions as you are reading it. Kara, what are some of the questions you should ask yourself?

Kara: What is it saying? Like if you said it in your own words. What does it tell me about God? What does it tell me about myself? What will this lead me to do?

Pastor: Sure. Not every section is going to answer all four questions, but you'll get more out of it if you start asking those questions. Dakota, what are the high points of worship?

Dakota: Baptism and Holy Communion.

Pastor: That's the Sacraments. That's one of the high points. What's the other high point? Think about it this way, why would baptism and the Lord's Supper be high points? Who is doing the acting then? In baptism this morning, I poured the water on, but who did all the work? Who brought Ashlyn to faith? Me?

Dakota: God.

Pastor: Yes, it couldn't be me. It has to be God. So the high points are when God comes to us, right? He comes to us through the Sacraments like you told me. What else does he come to us through? How else does he talk to us? It's his Words, right? Where do we find his Word?

Dakota: The Ten Commandments.

Pastor: That's a brief summary of his will, but in the Word, in the readings. So the Word and Sacraments are the high point of worship because that is where God comes to us. What's the goal of every Christian, Liv?

Olivia: To glorify God.

Pastor: Prove it.

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

Pastor: Do you remember the reference?

Olivia: No.

Pastor: Anybody remember the reference?

Kyle: 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Pastor: Yes. How do you know what's to God's glory, Luke? If I take that hymnal that's sitting right there and I come and smack you up the side of the head, is that to God's glory?

Luke: No.

Pastor: Why not?

Luke: Because you're not serving him.

Pastor: How do I know that God doesn't want me to be hitting people with hymnals?

Luke: Because that's not what they are used for.

Pastor: I could probably use it for that though, couldn't I? Do you want to find out?

Luke: No.

Pastor: God says "Don't hurt other people," right? He says that in his will. So something that is to the glory of God is according to his will, but what's the other thing it needs to be to be to his glory? Do you remember, Luke? Not only doing the right thing, but why do you do it?

Luke: To serve him because he loved us first.

Pastor: Yes, to show our love because he loved us first. So to his glory are the things that are out of love for him and according to his will. If I want to find his will, where do I find his will in a very brief form, Aaron?

Aaron: The Ten Commandments.

Pastor: His will is all throughout Scripture, but in the briefest form, it's in the Ten Commandments. One word summary of all Ten Commandments, Liv.

Olivia: Love.

Pastor: Who does he say to love in the first three Commandments?

Olivia: God.

Pastor: Who does he say to love in the last seven Commandments?

Olivia: Other people.

Pastor: Love for God and love for others. The First Commandment deals with love for?

Kyle: God.

Pastor: Second Commandment?

Kyle: God's name.

Pastor: Third Commandment?

Luke: His Word and Sacraments.

Pastor: Love for God's Word and worship. Fourth Commandment, Jo?

Jordan: Love for God's representatives.

Pastor: Sixth Commandment, Matt?

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

Pastor: Seventh Commandment, Claire?

Claire: The gift of possessions.

Pastor: The Fifth Commandment, Cassie?

Cassie: Love for human life.

Pastor: Eighth Commandment, Kara?

Kara: Love for God's gift of a good reputation.

Pastor: Ninth and Tenth Commandments, remember that one, Dakota?

Dakota: Love for contentment.

Pastor: God's gift of contentment. You guys have studied the Ten Commandments, right? What becomes clear about each and every one of us after you've studied the Ten Commandments, Matthew?

Matt: That we are sinful and we never kept any of them.

Pastor: Okay, we are incredibly sinful and we don't keep any of them. So we talked about when we sin, we want to learn to do something naturally, like breathing. Like right now, Matt, what are you doing – inhaling or exhaling?

Matt: Inhaling?

Pastor: You can't inhale and talk at the same time.

Matt: Exhaling.

Pastor: Okay, you don't know which one you're doing. You're just doing it, right? You're not thinking inhale, exhale. So spiritually, we want to do spiritual breathing, which is exhaling and inhaling, after we sin. Cassie, tell me, what do we want to exhale in spiritual breathing?

Cassie: Our sins and put them on Jesus.

Pastor: And then do what with them? Confess our sins. Put them on Jesus, and do what? Keep doing them?

Cassie: Ask to be forgiven and stop doing them.

Pastor: Stop doing them. Turn away from them. Put them on Jesus. Trust that in Jesus they are – confess them and put them on Jesus and trust that he took them away and turn away from them. Inhale now, Cassie, what do we want to take in and breath deep?

Cassie: Trust that we are forgiven and then thankfully begin to serve Jesus.

Pastor: Okay, serve she said. Jo, what's the fancy church word for "service."

Jordan: Ministry.

Pastor: Aaron, who has a Christian ministry to perform?

Aaron: Every believer.

Pastor: You're sure?

Aaron: Yes.

Pastor: Is Ashlyn a believer now?

Aaron: Yes.

Pastor: Does she have a ministry to perform then?

Aaron: Yes.

Pastor: Are you going to tell me what it is? That's a tougher question now, right?

Aaron: I can't.

Pastor: Ashlyn's ministry now would be to be the object of her parents' love, right? That's how she is serving God in that role as part of that family unit. What I want to get at about ministry is that every Christian has a ministry to

perform. You guys probably are going to hear that you're the church of tomorrow. Claire, are you the church of tomorrow?

Claire: No.

Pastor: Does that mean you are going to fall away?

Claire: No, we are the church of today.

Pastor: Why are you the church of today?

Claire: Because we have gifts to use today to serve God.

Pastor: In the future, how might you use your gifts differently, Kyle?

Kyle: Use them in the church.

Pastor: You're not going to use them in the church now? You're in the church now, aren't you?

Kyle: We can't do things like the Elders stuff.

Pastor: Yes, there are different things you can't do. In the future, your role might be broader, but you have gifts to use right now. That's one of the things we've learned in Confirmation class. Confirmation, what is the Confirmation ceremony, Cassie?

Cassie: Confessing our faith.

Pastor: That you are unified in faith with this congregation. What should it NOT be, Liv?

Olivia: The end of growing in faith.

Pastor: Yes, you should be growing in faith all the rest of your lives. That's what God wants all of us to do. Do you believe God has strengthened you in these years of Confirmation instruction?

All: Yes.

Pastor: Do you think God is through strengthening you?

All: No.

Pastor: Do you think I'm through questioning you?

All: Yes.

Pastor: Okay, thank you very much.