

Socrates once said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." College and high-school students who have recently taken examinations may beg to differ with Socrates. In the past couple of weeks college and high-school students have been tested and examined. I hope all of you who took them passed with flying colors. I'm sure some students failed. And if you have ever failed an important exam you may feel that the examined life is not worth living either.

The exams we take in school test our knowledge of history, english, math, home economics, and many other useful things that we need to know to live in the world and be good citizens. But there is another kind of exam which is far more important and far more difficult because it is a self-administered examination. I'm talking about self-examination. Self examination tests our knowledge of our inner selves. Do we know ourselves? Do we know who and what we are? Do we know what lies hidden in the depths of our hearts. Sigmund Freud and others have told us that the real person you are may be hidden from yourselves. We are just now becoming aware of the hidden things in our sub-conscious that influence our thoughts and actions. But have you ever looked beneath the surface of your lives? Do you ever examine your inner self? Do you know who you are? Do you know what you are?

The words of our Scripture Lesson come near the end of the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount is a revelation of God's will for all who confess Christ as Lord. We need to read over the Sermon on the Mount and meditate upon it often and examine our lives in the light of what Jesus taught there. In fact, our Scripture Lesson for this morning constrains us to do this. Most of us are church members. We have confessed Christ as Lord but do we do the will of God as he has revealed it in the Sermon on the Mount? Have we ever really examined our lives in the light of the Sermon on the Mount to see if we are obeying God's will? Jesus says, "Not everyone who says ^{to me,} 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven." On that day when the risen Christ returns to judge the living and the dead, he says there will be chilling surprises in store for many good church members who will hear Christ declare to them, "I never knew you. Depart from me you evildoers."

Who are these people Jesus orders to depart from him? They sound and act like good Christians, the kind that we would ^{all} like to have in our congregation. They are fervent Christians. They say, "Lord, Lord". They have made a confession of faith in Christ as Lord and they pray to

him. They prophesy. That means basically that they speak out for the Lord. They cast out demons and do many mighty works in the name of Christ. But Jesus doesn't know them. He calls them evildoers. It seems that they had never examined their inner selves. Jesus does not know them because they don't know who they are themselves. They had never looked into their hearts and examined themselves in the light of the word of God. "Man looketh on the outward appearance but God looketh upon the heart," the Lord said to the prophet Samuel. When these people look at themselves outwardly they look pretty good, in fact, better than most. But Jesus looks into their hearts and says, "I never knew you. Depart from me you evildoers." They had deceived themselves. They had never examined their hearts. They didn't know who they were. And Christ didn't know them either.

How can anyone who confesses Christ as Lord and who does such miraculous things in the name of Christ be considered an evil-doer? As I look into my own heart and examine myself I can see how easily this can be. A man or woman may be an evildoer in the very act of confessing Christ as Lord. It's always a terrible thing to deny Christ as Lord. But there is something far worse. It's far worse

to say, "Gord, Lord", to confess faith in Christ as a formality, out of peer pressure, under parental pressure, when you don't really mean it, when, in fact, you have given him no thought.

How many of us knew what we were doing when we first joined the church as teenagers? Did we know that we were kneeling, not only before the pastor and elders, but in the very presence of the Lord Jesus Christ? Did we realise at that time that that confession of faith bound us to our life's end to do the will of God. When Martin Luther celebrated Holy Communion for the first time as a priest he trembled in fear because, in the theology of the Roman Catholic church which he believed at that time, he was holding the very body and blood of the crucified Christ in his hands. It was an awe-inspiring event for him. Today, most of the Western technological world, of which the United States is the leader, has been stripped of that kind of religious wonder and awe. But should we not also tremble with wonder, fear, love, and awe when we bow and confess Jesus as Lord in his very presence? For how many good church members is the weekly worship service, in particular the prayers, responses, and confessions merely an empty ritual? How many of us make this revolutionary confession

which has defied kings and all sorts of tyrants and dictators even in this twentieth century, without serious thought as to what we are doing, in fact, with out any intention of obeying Christ as Lord? Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Jesus went on to say that many, not a few people scattered here and there within the church, but many will say to him on that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? Have we not cast out demons in your name and in your name done many mighty works?" And Jesus will say to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you evil-doers." These are not pagan men and women in darkest Africa who never heard of Christ. They are not the drunkards and prostitutes and homosexuals whom the world looks upon as sinners. These are not the non-churched people who stay at home on Sundays. They are active in the work and worship of the church. They can point to all kinds of things they have done, things which have helped other people. And they have done it all in the name of Christ. They have prophesied in his name. They have cast out demons in his name. They have performed miracles in his names. These are not ordinary church members. These are

leaders in the church who have extraordinary gifts that most of us don't have. The old proverb says, "If gold rusts, what shall iron do." In other words, if men and women who have performed miracles in the name of Christ fail their final exams, what will become of the rest of us?

On that day when Jesus judges the secrets of our hearts, therefore, how many good church members, how many missionaries, evangelists, elders, trustees, deacons, Sunday school teachers, and people with extraordinary gifts of the Spirit will go unrecognized. How many ministers, perhaps even myself, will hear Jesus say, "I never knew you." How many will look into the piercing eyes of Jesus which see into the very depths of our hearts and sub-conscious world and there will be no look of recognition when he looks at us. He won't recognize ^{us}/as the ones who did all these wonderful things. We thought we knew Christ but he's not at all what we expected. And he doesn't know us. Somehow these people have deceived themselves. How is it possible that so many sincere men and women who have done so much in the name of Christ are considered evildoers in the eyes of Christ?

At this point I'm reduced to silence and intense introspection as I examine my heart in the light of the re-

velation of God's will in the Sermon on the Mount. Am I, even I, one who has made a living of saying, "Lord, Lord" without doing the will of God. Have I merely studied and preached on the Sermon on the Mount without doing it? As a minister I must look into my heart and examine myself and ask myself, "Have I deceived myself with regard to my relationship to Christ? Have I become merely a professional minister who carries on my work merely in order to make a living? Have I become a professional whose job it is to please people, to tell everybody how much God loves us without, at the same time, upsetting them with the radical demands he places on our lives?"

These verses must reduce us all to silence and introspection, especially if we are active in the church, especially if we are leaders in the church? If we respond to the authority of these words of Christ we must examine our lives and our relationship to Christ in the light of the Sermon on the Mount. There are questions we need to ask ourselves as we read and study and meditate upon the Sermon on the Mount.

Do we have a sentimental Christianity? By that I mean a Christianity which places no moral and ethical demands upon us such as we find in the Sermon on the Mount.

Do we have a formal Christianity? By that I mean, is our relationship primarily to this church as a religious and historical institution, or do we know Jesus Christ as he knows us in the depths of our hearts?

Do the beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount characterize our lives? Are we poor in spirit? Do we mourn for our sins? Are we pure in heart? Do we hunger and thirst after righteousness or are satisfied with our moral attainments?

Does our Christianity affect our inner lives, our motivations, feelings, and thoughts as well as our outward behavior, or does it just help us keep up the appearances?

Is our brand of Christianity characterized by self-righteousness and judgmentalism or do we first remove the log from our own eye before criticizing others?

Do we have merely a doctrinal Christianity? By that I mean do we believe intellectually that Christ is Lord but don't do the things he commands us in the Scriptures?

And, finally, have we entered in the narrow ^{of a radical} gate ~~or~~ biblical Christianity are we traveling the broad road of popular Christianity?

Self-examination of this kind is not very popular. Many people identify this kind of thing as unhealthy. But is it? Does our discomfort with self-examination really

reflect a fear of knowing ourselves as we really are, ^{and} Are we afraid we will see in our hearts/in the depths of our sub-conscious world things that we have not wanted to admit about ourselves. There is a healthy kind of self-examination which God commands. The Psalmist prayed, "Examine me, O Lord..." The apostle Paul commands us, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith."

Socrates was right when he said, "The unexamined life ^{The life that refuses to examine itself in the light of God's law} is not worth living." ~~The examinations that are still~~ ^{is not worth living.} fresh in the memories of high-school and college students are not the most important ones. The important examination is self-examination. Have you examined your life in the light of God's law? Have you examined your heart in the light of the teaching of Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount? Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

AMEN.