1 Peter 3:15. But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.

This past Thursday evening we had the opportunity to listen to the examination of our confirmand McKayla. She did an awesome job, and if you knew the whole of the text that we are looking at you would see just how that examination fits in with the encouragement and direction of God’s Word. You see, the very next line of our reading says this: **“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”**

In essence, that’s what you were doing on Examination night. You were **“giving a reason for the hope that you have.”** We asked questions of our confirmand and she then gave the Biblical answer to those questions. But understand, this examination was not some sort of test…where if you pass you get to continue to confirmation. Nope, I can tell you right now there would have been no examination unless that student had already demonstrated that she was ready, that she grasps and understands the wonder and marvel of our Christian faith and hope. The examination of a Confirmand is really the opportunity for the confirmand to express their faith and to share that faith with others during that service.

I can tell you that in my experience as a Pastor, the vast majority of Confirmands on the day of their Confirmation, because of their classes and because of their consistent exposure to the wonder of God’s Word stand before you in true and full faith based on the hope that they have. The hope that they have is in the forgiveness of sins found in Jesus. The hope that they have, is the confidence that heaven is their home because of what Jesus has done and accomplished for them. I will tell you that I believe most confirmands on the day of their Confirmation have a true faith in Jesus and God’s Holy Word.

And then they get older and have to confront life. Now don’t get me wrong, I speak to and encourage every student to try and grasp what is yet to come. That yet in their life they will be facing challenges and temptations galore. Perhaps tougher challenges and temptations than my generation ever endured, but I think that’s because in today’s world what I faced as a high school senior or college freshman, these kids now have to endure in 8th, 9th or 10th grade. Challenges to be like the world. To swallow what the world says is good and right and eventually to begin that process of rejecting the very truths that on the day of their confirmation they were so sure of. I warn them. I tell them. I plead with them to stay in God’s Word, to stay in church, to stay in touch with me as I will always guide and direct them to what God says in His Holy Word.

But all too often the world seems to win. Countless of our young people who by the time they graduate from High School and get into life clearly demonstrate that they no longer believe that Jesus Christ is God and Lord or that Jesus Christ is their Savior from sin. How do they display that? They have now sucked in all the lies and distortions of evolution, rejecting the Bible’s claim of a six day creation, the very truth that Jesus himself upheld. They reject the idea and truth of sin and have now bought the world’s idea that all truth is relative, that it is only true if you want it to be and if you don’t believe it is true, then it is false! They now choose to live in sin, somehow believing that though Jesus is to have died for their sins, they can live in sin, embrace it, celebrate it, practice it and support it, and Jesus is just going to have to accept that. Saddest to me, is how many of you parents, yes, you confessing Christian parents, just go along with this sinful lifestyle as if it doesn’t matter! That’s the battle we all face. The battle of keeping our faith and the truth of God clear and certain in our lives.

The key to this faith is found in the opening words of our text, yes, the words that we highlighted for ourselves today. Let’s contemplate all the more the word of our God. Our theme will be: **SET APART CHRIST!**

Do note the absolute direction that the Apostle Peter wants you to take. Now, let’s be clear on something right from the start. This isn’t really Peter speaking. It is the Lord using Peter to verbally inspire His Word that we might grasp His truth and marvel. This is God’s Word. Now if you believe in an all-knowing, present everywhere and all powerful God, what is the problem with believing that God has the power to use men and still clearly, precisely and without error give us His Word and truth? That’s right, I am telling you clearly on the basis of God’s Word that to reject God’s Word, the Bible, at any point is to reject the truth of God! And don’t hand me the old, “faith is not an all or nothing deal!” It is! How do you figure you get to pick and choose what to believe and not to believe? Who appointed you God that you can declare: “This is right…this is wrong!” If you don’t believe that God has the power to directly give His Word through men, without error, ***then you don’t believe in God!*** So what does God say to us here?

He says, **“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.”**

I don’t know, that seems kind of simple and straight forward to me! Note we are talking about what is going on in your heart! God is concerned with your heart. He is not so much concerned with hands, feet, lips, your actions as much as He is concerned with your heart. Remember what our Lord reveals to us in Matthew, **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** You know what that means. You will behave and act in accord with what is in your heart. True, our heart is sinful by nature. It likes sin, it hates God. We are also told that once we have Christ we have a new heart and mind. Here is that same truth put into a plea. Keep Christ in your heart! To Keep Christ in your heart means to keep your heart exposed to and under the influence of Jesus who is found and revealed in God’s Word. Now I realize that to speak about “under the influence” might seem rather bad, because when we hear that phrase we think of the negative influence of drugs or alcohol. But to be “under the influence” of Jesus means to be under the influence of what is good, positive, upbeat and right. That’s what God wants for our life. Christ in our hearts. Christ as the foundation and heart of our heart!

Now what does this mean that we **“set apart Christ as Lord”?** Let’s just talk about that word, the verb, “to set apart.” Actually in other places we would translate this words as “sanctify, to make holy.” The Bible uses these word in two ways: 1. Called out of the unbelieving world to faith. 2. That we are led by the Gospel to hate sin and be eager to live a holy life filled with goods works. The word here is clearly used in both senses. First that Christ be found in our hearts. That we hear the call of faith and cling to Jesus. Second that Christ have a positive influence on our hearts. One of my dictionaries says this: “to sanctify, to venerate and adore Him, thus dispelling all fear of man.” I thought that meaning telling. It means we hold Jesus more near and dear to us rather than man or the world. We don’t worry about what man will do or say, we are more concerned with Jesus and what He has to say to us. By the way, this is really that old “faith without works is dead” teaching. You can’t claim Christ without living Christ! I hope that everyone grasps what that means.

So let’s then talk of “Christ as Lord.” What does it mean that Jesus is the Lord? You know what? We can look at some of our other readings this morning to grasp this. Our historical reading from Acts. Paul preaching in the Areopagus of Athens. He says, **“Now what you worship as unknown I am going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth…he himself gives all men life and breathe and everything else…in him we live and move and have our being…he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”** There is the Father and Jesus all wrapped up as one. God reveals through Paul to those gathered the truth of God! Jesus says in the Gospel reading: **“Because I live you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.”** Can you really dismiss Jesus and not also dismiss the Father? Can you dismiss the Word and not dismiss God and Jesus?

We could go on and on with such passages. Jesus is God, the Father is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. God rules everything in every way. Everything revealed in God’s Word is of and from God. In order to know God you need to know the Word and remember Jesus is called “The Word.” How about this? Just think of that well known and famous passage and what it is truly saying to us. You know, John 3:16! **“For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.”** Have you ever read the entire content of that section of God’s Word? Do you think we get to decide what is belief and what is not? Here’s how this section ends after this wonderful passage, **“This is the verdict; Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds are evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”** I share all of that because we have to get past this idea that somehow Jesus and God are different things. That is not the testimony of Scripture. We have to get past the idea that we can do what we want and God will have to accept it! To absolutely believe that Jesus is God and Lord is essential to our faith and what it means to be a Christian.

Now I would expect that you grasp that other side of Jesus as Lord? Our text brings it out in verse 18: **“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body and made alive by the Spirit.”** The resurrection of Jesus is everything which is why this verse tells us He, Jesus was made alive by the Spirit. That’s a reference to his resurrection and is helping us grasp why the first part of that verse is true. That Christ died for sins once for all. He is our atoning sacrifice. He is our Savior, who came at the Father’s direction and his own choosing. Who came to pay for our sins and in that payment open the door to eternal life! I like the ending there: **“to bring you to God.”** We see this Jesus as God and Lord. We grasp this Jesus as the complete and true revelation of Father and the Father’s will. We belong to the Father in Jesus and through Jesus and because of Jesus. Without Jesus we have nothing. Let Jesus’ words sink in: **“Because I live you also will live!”** As Jesus was made alive by the Spirit so we are also made alive by the Spirit. Now we have faith! Now we can grasp the Light, see the Light, walk in the Light, live like lights in this dark world. This is faith and how it impacts us.

I don’t know why people have so much trouble with this Christ is our Savior or that Christ is our Lord thing? It is clear that’s why God gave us His Word. So that we, sinners that we are, can become God’s children. We can be made alive. We can walk in the light. We can, because of the marvel of God’s power shared with us in His Holy Word and in Jesus, do exactly as this passage encourages. We can **“set apart Christ as Lord.”** We can have Him **“in our hearts.”** We can be filled with the hope of eternal life and salvation in Jesus because of the wonder, marvel and redemption of Jesus. Dear people, dear McKayla: **“In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.”** Amen.