

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 14 JULY 2013 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 33:1

Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Scripture Versification 2-4:1

Confession of faith: Apostolic

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy universal Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting

Amen.

After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 130:2

Law

Psalm: 130:2

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation of the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises**
- **General prayer**
- **Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.**

Amen

Psalm

Scripture reading: 1 Corinthians 13

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Scripture text: 1 Corinthians 13:13

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

(1 Corinthians 13:13)

... but the greatest of these is love...

We are Christians still lacking so many good things.

- The apostle Paul writes that love together with faith and hope is the actual content and grounds of the Christian life.
- We indeed claim that we are “anchored” in Christ!

But the sin also has exercised its influence upon these spiritual properties of us and now matters it has happened that we have learnt the bad habit of speaking a lot about love but we have lost the ability of truly loving.

It is one thing talking about the theory of love, but it is a totally different matter to be able to love.

- Many of us, should it be expected from us to do something for somebody else, are immediately disenchanted.
- We immediately have lots of excuses why we cannot afford to offer up anything for somebody else.

- We gauge our love on what we receive, not by what we have to give.
- We are – to be truthful - not prepared to always take others into consideration for their circumstances because our own lives and our own interests are completely on the foreground.

Should we truly be convinced Christians our lives must mirror the signs of true love – towards God and towards our neighbour. We must prove this conviction!

When we read Galatians 5:22 we find a fairly long list of spiritual gifts we have because the Holy Spirit works inside of us.

- It is important that the first fruit named due to the working of the Holy Spirit is indeed the love.
- It means that the love in you demonstrates to other people what the salvation in Christ means to you.
- Differently put: what it is to be inside the Holy Spirit.

The love is much more than what we normally make of it – or even more than we realize!

- Per example the love frees us of sin.
- It is written in Galatians 5:13 that we are called to freedom by the love – but we may not use this freedom for the wrong purposes.

These words are laden just as heavily because it means that we are no longer under the command of the law.

- We no longer need to maintain the law as prerequisite to our salvation. The love of the Lord Jesus Christ freed me from this part of the law and its stipulations. But exactly therefore is the demand is also that we must live out this love that comes from the Lord towards us: towards Him and towards our neighbour.

You of course must always be careful that this freedom in Christ does not lead you into wrong matters as what was the case with the heathens living together with the New Testamental Christians. They only knew physical love. They marred themselves with all the physical sins they committed. Consider the physical sins like prostitution, adultery, drunkenness and orgies the Bible warns against.

How then must a Christian exercise love? Verse 13 puts it clearly that the most important part of love is service. You must render service, want to render service and can render service. Seek through service of love that which is the best for your neighbour.

Very simply put it means that now already we must exercise the type of love in our lives that you would one day exercise in the hereafter. We must mirror the kind of love revealed by Jesus Christ and also by the workings of the Holy Spirit.

Observe in what way the Triune God loves us: the Father does not want us to, after the Fall, just go to hell. He remains loving us and due to that decides to redeem us. That is why the Bible teaches that God loved us first.

There is also the love of Jesus Christ for us. He does not die with an undetermined vision on the salvation that comes through the cross. He specifically dies for those He chose and answers His love.

The same is relevant to the Holy Spirit. When we read the Canons of Dordt we find that it often refers to it that the Holy Spirit does not work in everybody's faith and conversion. Not because He cannot – because He does not want to. The Bible teaches that it was not granted to everybody to believe.

But part of the salvation we receive through Christ and what the Holy Spirit also works is the love. Therefore we must love God with our entire being and all our power. And therefore it is written that somebody who loves God is also known to God.

Of course always the demand that we must carry this love further. 2 Thessalonians 3:5 teaches:

Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

Here with love it is meant the sanctification by which the congregation gives himself to God. That also includes the partaking in the worshipping service.

Colossians 3:14 teaches that the congregation must clothe himself with the love which is the bond of perfection.

- We must thus dress ourselves with love the same way we dress ourselves with clothes.
- It is therefore very clear that the love is the unity that has to form the congregation.

We as congregation must also test ourselves to this principle.

- Is it really so that every time there were some chafing we, from our side, did everything possible to rectify it? Or did we only look after ourselves?
- Is it possible that in our execution of love we can be attentive enough towards the weaknesses of others?

Asking such questions is not nonsense because this last Bible passage teaches that we must be perfect in our execution of love.

- This we can quite possibly not reach in this life, but nothing prevents us from trying!
- Also nothing stops us to, with this principle in mind, think about what the Lord must forgive me before I do not anger myself about others.

We should not unnecessarily be difficult because that is not a principle of love.

- Being difficult always has something of conceitedness – the sin of the devil – and also some hatred in it.
- There are times when we must differ from others, but then the differing must be to the glory of the Lord.

Here the Lord lists gifts of grace.

- Even the most excellent gifts of grace cannot compete with the gift of loving.
- Consider everything listed: the ability of speaking in tongues or the ability of prophecy, which is at any rate an insight in the secrets of the Lord Himself, or not even the knowledge or faith great enough to move a mountain can compare to the possession of the love.

You could possess all other gifts of grace but lacking love you remain a piece of metal sounding when something hits against it.. a cymbal that makes a noise when hit..nothing...

This is why the Bible teaches that all other gifts will pass by, but the love will not.

- On the new earth there will be no languages of prophecies, then all mysteries will be fulfilled – but love will still be there.
- Perfect love between God and us and between man and his neighbour.

The love gives us a very beautiful image of the last times.

- Should we believe and pray we will carry the love of the Lord.
- The love of the Lord will also resurrect us and the love of the Lord will carry us through His judgements.
- The love of God promises us a new earth that will be without sin and whereupon everything will be perfect.

Our love must mirror this love of God and also be aimed on the fulfillment thereof.

- We are commanded to, like the Lord, be long-suffering and brimming with grace.
- We must not be jealous and also not seek or promote our own.
- Therefore we may never be embittered against God or any person, because in the love of God there is no place for all these things.

Our love must also follow God's love in that it must be known to all people. (Philippians 4:5)

- Our love must thus be exercised so honestly and openly that it attains a state of common knowledge.

But we must keep in mind that love does not just arrive on its own.

- Love must be exercised to stay alive and to grow stronger.
- Herein the Holy Spirit helps us, but we must put in a lot of energy to let our love for God and our fellow humans grow.

Keep in mind if God loved us so much that He sent us His Son from heaven then we must follow this love.

- Because the Lord Jesus Christ loved us so much that He died for our sakes we must display a lot more patience, bearing and offering for our fellow being.
- Should we couple this to the sincerity worked inside of us by the Holy Spirit our relationship with God will also benefit thereby.

Come, let us seek this love and exercise it according to the standards of God.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 73:10

The Lord bless and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you, the Lord turn His countenance to you and give peace.

Amen

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