

## REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 12 JANUARY 2014 MORNING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 34:6

*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**

Psalm 89:3

**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 103:9*

Law

Psalm: 103:9

**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 86:6

**Scripture reading:** Isaiah 5

**Scripture text:** Isaiah 5:20

**20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!**

(Isaiah 5:20)

“ Oh-Well, it is not so bad” This is a well-known expression we often use to justify bad things.

- This kind of expression is very dangerous because it is extremely dangerous to, in such an easy way, cause limits to soften where indeed a sharp difference has to be drawn and also where witness must emanate from believers.
- Only those who constantly do self soul-searching and always, with the needed remorse, repair their case with the Lord can of course deliver this witness.

In this passage of Isaiah 5 verse 8 to 24 the Lord announces His punishment over His people.

- But this is not just a normal announcement of punishment.
- By six pronouncements of misery the Lord indicates what the punishment is about. Full-time in the background there is the grace of the Lord waiting for His children to come to the realization of and conversion from their sins so that He can bless them.

It is important for us to note that with each pronouncement of misery the sin is very practically called by its name.

- Every time after the Lord has named a specific type of sin He indicates that He is not only going to punish only those (type of) sinners.
- He punishes all the people where this type of sin is found.

None of the sins listed here are new or outdated, because all of them still occur at present (possibly in other forms, but the principle remains)

- Therefore these pronouncements of misery are ever valid – it thus unequivocally includes us all.

The first pronouncement of misery deals with people pursuing bottomless riches.

- It does not mean that you are not allowed to be rich.
- It deals with it that certain types of rich people completely lose sight of the will of the Lord in their hunt for riches.

The example used in verses 8 – 10 is about the people unchecked procuring property because their wealth became their God.

- This type of rich in fact resists himself by his wealth against the Lord.
- It deals with it that the Lord in His justness divided the land of Canaan according to the lot.

Decision by means of the lot is in fact the revelation of the will of the Lord. This we read in Numbers 33:54.

- Therewith you must keep in mind what the Lord told in Leviticus 25:23 to the Jews.

- There it is written that nobody may permanently sell ground in Canaan because it belongs to the Lord.

During the times of Isaiah there was a strong group of people claiming that the Lord was powerless and that they would do as they liked.

- They then wanted to show the Lord that they as humans would take His land into their possession – and He would not be able to do anything about it.
- In Mica 2:2 we read that they attained these riches even by fraud and murder.

*The claim by the Lord that He would punish those who reject Him, people who want to create their own salvation by means of earthly means is still relevant at present. Therefore the demand is still standing for such people to come to conversion and humble themselves to the Lord.*

The second pronouncement of misery aims itself against another group of people exercising gluttony and love of pleasure.

- Possibly this pronouncement of misery is sharper aimed at the address of the rich during the times of Isaiah.
- The Holy Spirit guided Isaiah to realize that they with their lighthearted lives did not understand the seriousness of the times.
- Already during their times the Lord had the Assyrians to take steps.

*Keep in mind that at that time the Assyrians had already defeated the ten tribes of Israel and were now threatening Judah.*

Isaiah is now complaining that there is no spiritual understanding in the signs of the times and therefore his people cannot come to conversion.

Should they have been able to understand why the nations are in conflict with one another they would have recognized the punishing hand of the Lord against the non-belief of peoples and rulers therein.

This is why the exile took place: the nobles of the children fell into lightheartedness and now the people had to bear the punishment upon themselves and their leaders.

The point is just that every person as individual, but everybody together as a nation, must keep in mind that the Lord is calling them to account for the lifestyle they lived together with or against the Lord. (Compare Hosea 4:6)

- Today this principle is still true over us living in this land.
- The Lord is also going to hold us accountable for everything happening in this land and also how we handled it.

During the times of Judah there was a group who was unable to see any further than drink and guzzling – therefore it was the high-point of their lives.

- The pity is just that the Lord includes their sins together in the parcel of punishment disposed over the people.
- The punishment of Jerusalem is quite poetically described:

- The city will go under from hunger and thirst because the Hades will open its throat wide and swallow the entire lot.
- A cruel death is prescribed to the people.

The image used here by Isaiah reminds you about Numbers 16:31 where the earth opened and swallowed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and all their households.

- This took place when the three Levites rose against the Lord.
- They were driven by their own conceitedness.

The point the Lord is making with us by this pronouncement of misery is that the Lord of the heavens maintains His highness by casting down all forms of human conceitedness and grandeur.

- He does not hesitate explaining His almight by punishment to the people who disregard or reject it. (Compare Isaiah 1:9)
- The Lord will see to it that His holiness is maintained at all times and to do so in this instance the Lord will destroy Jerusalem.
- To describe the total destruction of Jerusalem it is prophesized how the cattle of the nomads (who are poor) will graze where Jerusalem stood.

The third pronouncement of misery is aimed at the unashamed sinners and mockers.

- Here it deals with the people who became blinded by their sins.
- Their sins and their guilt entangles them stronger and deeper on the road away from the Lord.
- Thereby they gain the judgement of the Lord over them.

From what they believe it is clear that they distrust the Lord a lot.

- They put to Him a sort of ultimatum that He very soon has to comply with their demands so that they can see where He wants to go.
- This is not the only time that Isaiah refers to the belittling of the Lord's authority by the people.
  - In Isaiah 28:22 he again refers to the people mocking the Lord for not being able to fulfil His judgements.
  - Jeremiah and Ezekiel complained about the exact same problems. (Jeremiah 5:12 and Ezekiel 12:22)

The fourth pronouncement of misery deals about people falsifying the truth.

- Here it deals with moral basics, good and bad – but it specifically deals with people wanting to guide public opinion in the wrong way.
- The words “light” and “darkness” addresses that which is conducive to welfare and that which is destructive by nature.
- This group is people who smooth out limits that should not have been smoothed out.
- They do not see (enough) evil in bad things and also not (enough) good in what is right.

From Isaiah 32:5 it is clear that there was a time in the history of the people when they called a fool a noble and considered a crook as an important man.

- The idea is that these people hold the grace bestowed upon the people by the Lord as useless.
- Whilst they want to let the disasters, used by the Lord in punishing disbelief, go through as the start of the day of grace.

During these few months prior to the election we must deeply search our souls about this point and pray with the needed humbleness to the Lord that the Holy Spirit would guide us so that we will regard and judge over matters differentiatingly. And also vote by differentiating.

The fifth pronouncement of misery is against people that are so meek that they do not accept that all wisdom comes from the Lord.

- They are people who resisted the teachings of Isaiah because they believed that they knew better.
- Proverbs 1:7 became lost to these people. It is written:  
**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.**  
(Proverbs 1:7)

Is it not true that, through the ages, this attitude of haughtiness and regarding yourself better than what you are, has worked the demise and fall of God's creatures?

- This was how the devil came to a fall, and it was how Adam came to a fall.
- In principle it is exactly how every person is who commits sin.

Where it happens amongst us we must by the necessary true self-knowledge come to conversion and humble ourselves to the Lord.

The sixth pronouncement of misery addresses two groups

- The one is the drinkers and orgy lovers of verse 11
- The other is the group twisting the justice.

Of course two matters go hand in hand because alcohol abuse dulls your realization of duty. Often it causes a new need for money, which often is attained by blackmail.

- Amos 4:1 indeed refers to it that these people ill-treated their slaves and trod on the poor.
- and that the entire life for a certain influential group consisted out of a drunken existence.

All of us are aware that in our land emotions are swept up highly. With some so high that all sense of reason have evaporated.

- We who are true believers may not be part thereof.
- We must simply see to it that we always have a sober insight into what is true and proper.
- This is not impossible because the Holy Spirit is always with us. All we need to do is to pray and live in full submission to the Lord.

We must always keep this one matter well in mind: The crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus granted us gifts and insight that the heathens and false believers do not possess.

- We must live by these insights we have through the Lord Jesus' deeds of redemption.
- It must be a testimony emanating always from us because a Christian without testimony is not a Christian.

In this passage this sermon is dealing with the Lord clearly shows every time that sin lives under the various groups of people because their insight into faith has failed them.

- No testimony emanated against these people from the other believers.
- Therefore the punishment of the Lord comes over everybody.

*This makes the fact clear that the sins of others do not fix your sins – you always remain responsible to the Lord for everything you do. This is also true about this coming election.*

Every one of us must properly bring himself to facing the will of the Lord.

- We must confess to the Lord our true remorse about our sins.
- Then we must enter the future with an immovable trust in the almight of God.
- We must not be people who mock the council of the Lord because we do not have trust in His rule over us.
- And we must also not be people who, for the sakes of false loyalties, cause the borders between light and dark to diminish.

People render a confession with their lives when they speak for or against God. We seek the will of the Lord kneeling in our bedroom and then execute it.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 31:17

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**

Dr MJ Du Plessis  
 Helping Reverend  
 Reformed Church Clanwilliam  
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