

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 13 JULY 2014 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 43:3

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 of praise: 100:1-4

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 107:5, 6

Scripture reading: Galatians 1

Scripture text: Catechism Sunday 15; Galatians 1:4

...who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,
(Galatians 1:4)

False preachers led the congregations in the province of Galatia astray.

- The misconception was specifically about the crucifixion of Christ.
- That is why there are so many references to the suffering and death of Christ in the first verses of this letter.

Because Paul loved these congregations, he could not allow the ill weeds of Satan to take over this field of the church. That is why verse 4 focuses specifically on what we receive through Christ's death on the cross:

...who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age,

This is what the gospel is about: Jesus' love for us was so great that he suffered tremendously to tear us away from the power of sin.

Now consider what this self-sacrifice of Christ comprises. Here the Bible says:

“. . . who gave himself . . .”

- This is something totally unfamiliar to us, because when we want something we usually pay for it.
- In this case we received eternal redemption without having paid for it.
 - Christ Himself ransomed us.
 - He did not offer his Name or his power or any wealth.
 - We are, for example, not bought with money.
 - We also were not exchanged for an angel or for any earthly offering, being symbolical in the Old Testament.
 - Christ came to give Himself. He left his heavenly home, and as a human being He gave his life and his body for us.
 - Because He is also God, He rose from the dead.

Also, look at for whom Christ gave Himself

- If we were special, we would still have a foot to stand on that Christ could die for us!
- But we are not noble. We are not without sin.
 - We also do not resemble the crown of creation who reign in the Name of God when we consider all we do and all we say!
- Such people are reconciled with God through the death of Jesus Christ
 - Now we can actually understand that there is no other way in which we could be reconciled with God!
 - The Heidelberg Catechism explains in question 37 that Jesus suffered during all the time He lived on earth.
 - Every day, but especially at the end of his life, He bore in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race
 - And I am one of them!

His death is called a sacrifice.

- This is because the Lord had a religious ritual initiated in the Old Testament, namely the offerings.
- The priests brought offerings for reconciliation of the people.
- These propitiation sacrifices were repeated continuously, but they did not bring about reconciliation; they were only prophecies of Christ who would lay down his life for his people.
- These priests could only offer animals.
 - They could not offer themselves!
 - It also would not be of any use to offer themselves, because they were sinful themselves and could not reconcile themselves with God, let alone anybody else!
 - They were also not capable of rising from the dead!

Therefore God Himself brought the last offering.

- Christ could lay down his own life and regain it according to his own will.
- Therefore He prophesied that He would rise on the third day, and He did it to prove that He was master over death.
- In this way He acquired eternal life which we can acquire in no other way.
 - Because we cannot acquire it by keeping the Commandments,
 - and also not by trying to conquer death ourselves!

Christ's surrender to suffering and death was entirely voluntary. This makes the mystery of salvation so much greater.

- Who can force God to do anything? Nobody.
- He decided that our salvation would be like that.
- What else can we do but be extremely grateful?
- Especially if we also remember that Christ died not asking for it.
 - Who among us would have the courage to ask God to let his Son die for us?
 - We wouldn't even think about it, let alone hope that God the Father would have let his Son, as High Priest, be crucified for our sins.

Consider how Christ fulfilled our salvation.

- He did not sigh or hesitated once!
- He was never rebellious for having to suffer innocently for our burdens!
- He came and worked and lived completely voluntarily.
- In doing that He is the example of a child of God who always desires to do what pleases the Lord!

Christ let Himself be judged by Pontius Pilate.

- Although He is innocent, He granted it.
- Christ was not forced to be judged by Pontius Pilate because he lacked godly power!
- He voluntarily underwent the verdict and sentence of an earthly judge, because in that way our sentence was passed onto Him.

He also allowed Himself to be crucified.

- It is not so that Satan and the earthly powers were too great and strong for Him at that moment.
- A couple of hours earlier He told Peter to put away his sword, because He could pray to his Father and He would immediately make a legion of angels available to Him (Matthew 26:53).
- Christ was therefore not crucified because of weakness. He was crucified because through his crucifixion He would demonstrate his power and his grace/mercy.
- The Catechism says: Thereby I am assured that He took upon Himself the curse which lay on me
- This is an inconceivable mystery, but it is the love of God.

Why did the Lord Jesus Christ do it? What did He achieve by dying in such a way?

- The answer is that by doing this He reconciled us with God.
- We, whose names appear in the book of life!

- He removes from us the curse that rests on us because of our sins and disobedience (question 39).

Not only did He save us from the wrath of God or from the curse of the law.

- Christ saved us from the corruption/decay present in the entire world.
- It is true that we are saved from the wrath of God and from the curse of the law, but we are also saved from the power of Satan over us through things like our desires.
- Christ's crucifixion saved us from influences and habits that Satan initiates in our lives.
- We no longer have an excuse for being enslaved to sins!
- My black register of sin that had been drawn up by the world of injustice was undone by Jesus Christ's crucifixion.

If it were not for salvation through Jesus Christ, the situation would have been completely different!

- We all belong to the world and bear the character of the world, namely that of sin and injustice!
- And if God did not prevent it, we would go to rack and ruin with the world.
- The world is an immense power that threatens everything with destruction.
- Even unbelievers today fear that the world and its people are going to destroy themselves. This is why people everywhere are feverishly working on treaties between governments trying to safeguard the lives of mankind.
- Another sign of destruction is clearly reflected by the spiritual decay throughout the world. Immorality and spiritual filthiness can also destroy us!

But because we were— and still are — too weak to offer resistance, Jesus Christ offered resistance. Like snatching a stick from a fire He pulled us away so that we would not go up in flames. This is an image used by Zechariah (3:2) in the Old Testament.

Let us mirror ourselves in this:

- We feel ashamed because while we already have the virtues and effects of Christ's redemptive sacrifice, we are still unwilling to part with sins.
- We are still addicted to evil!
- Through the grace of the Lord Jesus this situation has changed:
- The Lord Jesus Christ died and through this the elect will not perish in hell with the world, but will enter the new earth — the kingdom of God.

Who among us can understand that it was the will of God? Who among us can understand that there is reconciliation now? Who can understand that the Father and the Son decided that the Son would die while Father and Son is One?

- We cannot. Our intellect and insight are sadly lacking.
- From this point on we must believe.
- Unconditionally trust in God, but also know that what God says, is the truth, although we do not understand it!

In this sermon judgement is therefore just as critical as mercy.

- It was the holy will of God that Christ had to die for the elect in such a painful and humiliating way.
- But it was also his holy will that those who are disobedient will be inflicted with this suffering of Christ.
- Christ, in his suffering and death, particularly conquered Satan and death so that those who do not want to repent, will be destroyed with Satan

Beloved brother and sister, do you know your sins? Do you know which way you are heading with your life? And also that we are not able to wipe out a single sin before God? Then you will know how great the mercy is in Christ Jesus because He saved you from these sins.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm 68:13

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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