

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 4 AUGUST 2013 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 16:5

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: 118:8

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

Scripture Versification 5-4:1, 2 [Romans 8:33-39]

Scripture reading: Luke 23:44-56

Scripture text: Luke 44-56; Catechism Sunday 16

Golgotha is the place of humiliation. The place where so many cruelties took place that you, because your words coagulate, cannot tell what took place there.

But on the other hand Golgotha is also the place of absolute amazement. People drive the Son of God up the hill to crucify Him there and when they hammer the nails through the hands and feel of this tired Man an unexpected prayer goes up:

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

(Luke 23:34)

Who of us would have expected that?

Who could have believed that notwithstanding the mockery of the rulers and soldiers as well as the mockery of one of the crucified murderers, the voice of the other dying man would pray for Christ to remember him when He arrives in His Kingdom? This is absolutely amazing that amongst all his miseries this dying voice could reprimand the other murderer:

But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?"

(Luke 23:40)

Who expected the sun to darken in the middle of the day for three hours? Who could that day believe that the dying Christ on the cross is the Son of God, busy saving the world?

In this way, during the moments of His greatest humiliation and to our highest amazement, the Lord Jesus Christ does His Mediator's work.

- Luke tells us that the first and last words of Jesus on the cross were a prayer to His Father.
- This is not done without reason! Here Luke typifies the Lord Jesus as the Intercessor.
- Even during His moments of dying the Intercessor is the go-between God and the people.
- The Intercessor is much rather prepared to forgive the people for what they are doing to Him than hating them!

Therefore He prays for God the Father to forgive them for crucifying Him.

- He much rather wants the people to have, through the absolution of their sins, the life with God,
- Instead of hating them and delivering the people who are His enemies to the wrath of the eternal God!

When we listen to everything that took place that day, namely the darkness, the tearing of the curtain and the people beating upon their chests, we then involuntarily ask:

- Why did there have to be a day of Golgotha?
- Why the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ drenching the soil – all this whilst He was so innocent that even the dying murderer was able to confess it?

On this point we are stopped by the mystery of God's Council.

- We cannot answer.
- Hebrews 2:14 teaches: **that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil**, so that He could free us therefrom.
- But why God planned it to take place in this way we cannot answer – it is a mystery.
- We cannot argue this matter at all. God willed the salvation of man to happen in this way.

Our Catechism also answers without any explanation: *Because of the justice and truth of God satisfaction for our sins could be made in no other way than by the death of the Son of God.*

The road of Christ was completely different to that of the people.

- Every time God granted grace to the people – but not to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- As an example: When Isaac had to be offered God provided a ram to be offered in his place.

Consider the amount of sick and cripple who approached Christ.

- To all of them there was grace. They leave Christ cured. Fully cured.
- But the moment Jesus had to die He was not pardoned.
- The demand put to Him was that He had to be obedient to the cross-death.
- That evening in Gethsemane the Lord Jesus even prayed that, should it be possible, He would not need to drink from this cup.
- But He accepted the Will of His Father. Therefore He died.

The enemies of the Lord Jesus longed for His death.

- The crucifixion satisfied them.
- When the guards arrived to, according to the request of the Jews, break the bones of the crucified (John 19:33) they found that Jesus was already dead.
- The Jews believed that a crucified was not allowed to hang on a cross on a Sabbath.
- Therefore, so that they could die faster, the guards broke the bones of the people who were not dead by the late afternoon.

Because the Lord Jesus was already dead they did not break His bones.

- They removed His body and He was buried.
- This funeral of Jesus is also not described without reason.
 - The Bible wants to underline the fact that Jesus was really dead.
 - As proof of the fact that He was dead He was buried.

Because the people were satisfied by the death of the Son of God, nature broke the silence.

- During the last entry into Jerusalem Jesus said that the stones would call out proclaiming Him as the Son of God should the people not do it!
- This is exactly what took place during the crucifixion!

The rocks tore open and the graves opened.

- In this way they proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God.
- They had also proved that Jesus would arise from death: many bodies of dead holy persons arose.
- These arisen holy remained in the graves until Christ had also arisen and then exited their graves and appeared to many people in Jerusalem. (Matthew 27:52,53)

The murderer lived longer than the Lord Jesus Christ did. In aid of hurrying their death their bones had to be broken. Why?

- Because they were unable to give up their lives.
- They could not, like Jesus Christ, decide that the moment of death has arrived and then give up His Spirit into the hands of the Father.
- Only the Lord Jesus Christ could do this.

So much God loved us. So much that His Son, Jesus Christ, willingly gave up His life for us the sinners.

The Lord Jesus Christ does this atonement as the Anointed of God – the One anointed to highest Prophet, Priest and King.

- He confirms His teaching to the people by His death.
- He was the Prophet that taught that the temple of His body would be broken down and that He would rebuild it in three days.
- He also told them that the earthly builders of God's Kingdom would even reject Him as an ordinary building-brick.

The image the Lord Jesus Christ wanted to create was that they could not by their values imagine Him as good enough to be built into the wall of the Kingdom of God.

- He is totally rejected as building material. This rejection comes true on the cross.
- His prophecy became true in His crucifixion.
- He was the prophet who said that God would use this stone, rejected by the earthly builders, as the cornerstone in the building of the heavenly kingdom.

The Lord Jesus also dies as the anointed Priest. His offer was the perfect offer. In Hebrews 9:13,14 we read:

**13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,
14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**

On the cross the Lord Jesus also showed Himself as a worthy anointed King of God.

- The prophet prophesized that Christ would return from death.
- The King proved that He as King indeed does have the power of ruling over death.

He voluntary gave Himself up to death and He broke the power of death.

- The forces of hell could not bind this King.
- The resurrection from death was thus the most powerful revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, our God's godly power – this is to what we grasp onto for our salvation!

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us thereby that the old person was crucified together with Him.

- That is this person we follow in sin.
- Further He teaches us that He also overcame the death and sin for our sakes so that we may live as free people in God.

Even though we are aware of all these things we so easily read over it, without understanding what is really taking place. Therefore our confession questions us further about what we confess in our faith: *Why is there added: He descended into hell?*

It is to underline the fact of the terrible suffering of Christ. We may not lose it from sight.

- He had to innocently endure the death sentence
- He was accursed under the law.
- He died because the sins of the people were punished by God to His Person.

- He had to endure in total desolation the most violent animosity of the devil – so desolate that He even had to call out during these moments that God had abandoned Him.

This is what Psalm 116 tells about by these words:

**The cords of death held me in deep despair;
The pangs of hell, like waves by tempest driven,
Rolled o'er my soul; by grief and sorrow riven**

(Psalm 116:2 Book of Praise Anglo-Genevan Psalter 1971 of the Canadian Reformed Churches.)

Beloved, live then like people freed from all deathly worries.

- Live life like people of whom all can see that their strength is in Christ, the Crucified.
- Should you be worried or in soul-fearing, make it a matter of prayer – God will clear it up for you because that is what the Lord Jesus Christ died in aid of.

This crucifixion-death ensures to us that nobody or nothing can remove us who believe from God because the crucifixion-death and the resurrection proved God as the most mighty and merciful God till eternity.

- Against Him the satan has no power or might.
- He guarantees our lives till eternity.

Come let us listen what our Heidelberg Confession teaches about this in Sunday 16:

Sunday 16

40. Q. Why was it necessary for Christ to humble Himself even unto death?

A. Because of the justice and truth of God[1] satisfaction for our sins could be made in no other way than by the death of the Son of God.[2]

[1] Gen. 2:17. [2] Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 2:9, 14, 15.

41. Q. Why was he buried?

A. His burial testified that He had really died.[1]

[1] Is. 53:9; John 19:38-42; Acts 13:29; I Cor. 15:3,4.

42. Q. Since Christ has died for us, why do we still have to die?

A. Our death is not a payment for our sins, but it puts an end to sin and is an entrance into eternal life.[1]

[1] John 5:24; Phil. 1:21-23; I Thess. 5:9, 10.

43. Q. What further benefit do we receive from Christ's sacrifice and death on the cross?

A. Through Christ's death our old nature is crucified, put to death, and buried with Him,[1] so that the evil desires of the flesh may no longer reign in us,[2] but that we may offer ourselves to Him as a sacrifice of thankfulness.[3]

[1] Rom. 6:5-11; Col. 2:11, 12. [2] Rom. 6:12-14. [3] Rom. 12:1; Eph. 5:1, 2.

44. Q. Why is there added: He descended into hell?

A. In my greatest sorrows and temptations I may be assured and comforted that my Lord Jesus Christ, by His unspeakable anguish, pain, terror, and agony, which He endured throughout all His sufferings[1] but especially on the cross, has delivered me from the anguish and torment of hell.[2]

[1] Ps. 18:5, 6; 116:3; Matt. 26:36-46; 27:45, 46; Heb. 5:7-10. [2] Is. 53.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 33:10

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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Scripture Modern King James Version unless stated differently.