

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 20 APRIL 2014

MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 146:1, 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 2:6

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

Scripture Versification 5-4:1, 2, 3, 6

Scripture reading: 1Corinthians 15:55-58

Scripture text: 1 Corinthians 15:55-58; Catechism Sunday 17

55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

(1Corinthians 15:55-58)

At some time or another in our lives we have all stood at an open grave. We have all experienced the inevitability of death at a grave.

- It is as if the coffin in the grave is trying to tell us that we will never again see the person who died. When somebody passes away we bid a final farewell to him/her.

This is why Jacob could not believe that Joseph was alive.

- Years before he had already accepted that Joseph was dead.
- Thus he would not believe it when his sons told him that Joseph, his son, was alive and well and serving as ruler of all Egypt.
- The disciples likewise could also not believe that the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead.

In Mark 16 we read that Mary Magdalene went to tell the disciples that Jesus had arisen from the dead and that He had appeared to her. We read in the Bible:

And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

(Mark 16:11)

However the joy of both groups of people, Jacob and the disciples, was unparalleled once they were convinced that their loved one who they believed to be dead was in fact alive.

The truth is that we do not die and disappear forever from all spheres of life.

- The truth is that we live, despite the fact that our bodies die, because death was defeated.
- Although doctors are still trying to fight all kinds of disease, death has been defeated, and every believer has been granted eternal life

In fact it is very strange that this great truth is so often ignored or denied.

- Banner headlines in our newspapers only speak about all the evil incidents in our daily lives – rape, the killing of innocent victims, and the destruction by senseless murders.
- Stories on the radio and TV are only about what is of importance for material wellbeing and so-called newsworthy matters.
- But about the constitution of eternal life and the new earth namely reconciliation and re-creation by the grace of God – very little, if any, is said, written or broadcast!

- Newspaper stories have sensational final remarks about mutilated bodies, but nothing is said about those same people who are already continuing to live for eternity.
- Nothing is written about the people who have been saved from mutilation and suffering through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We are living in a strange world – a world only tuned into the death and all the by-products of death!

- The modern world is only excited by evil and by death, which they actually nurture as being very precious.
- All this, while the truth is that the Lord made provision for us to survive death and to continue living.

It all converges in our religion: worshipping and confessing the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.

- The Lord Jesus Christ is an eternal God.
- He is almighty.
- Hence He took on the human nature and lived among us.

The truth is that the Lord Jesus came to earth to face suffering and death with His human body.

- He rose from the dead and returned to life in body and soul.
- The devil in hell was filled with dismay because he had been defeated by the Lord Jesus in the only area where he thought to have been king.

The life of the Lord Jesus bears the stamp of having been attacked by the devil, and of the Lord having defeated him every time.

- Just consider what happened after the Lord was baptized.
 - The devil attacked the Lord Jesus in the desert and tried to tempt Him to sin so that His work as Messiah would be futile.
 - This would have meant a victory for the devil.
- For the purpose of this sermon, let's look at the second temptation. Luke 4:5 onwards describes it

5 Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

7 "Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."

(Luke 4:5-7)

Satan approached the Lord Jesus with such self-confidence that he actually believed that he could conquer the Lord Jesus.

- Therefore the death of Jesus Christ created quite a stir, because it led to the impossible to happen:

- For the first time in history, man – by his own power – has risen from the dead and returned to life.

God wanted to demonstrate to the people who followed Jesus that death is not final.

- In the way God let Jesus rise from the dead, He will also raise from the dead all those who believe in Christ.
- In those days, same as today, a group of dishonest people tried to conceal the truth.
 - Hence they gave the guards a large sum of money, instructing them to spread the story that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body during the night.
- The truth of Jesus' resurrection was withheld from the people:
 - They were not to know that the true Saviour had conquered death for us.
 - There will always be lies trying to hide from us the truth of the life hereafter.

However, the apostle Paul went into the heathen world and spread this sensational news. He also met with adversity because the people tried to cover up the gospel he was teaching.

- Hence he said that Jesus' victory over death was a stumbling block to the Jews.
- This hurt them every time they heard about it because their Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus.
 - They were the people who shouted that His blood be on them and on their children.
 - The easiest way to escape from such a blunder is to either totally ignore the truth or simply hide the truth from other people.
- The gentile Greeks could also not believe it easily.
 - They listened to Paul's sermons attentively.
 - And they admitted that they had not heard anybody speaking with such wisdom about religion the way he did.
- But the moment he told them that death had been conquered because Jesus had risen from the dead, some of them sneered.
- Others said that they wanted to hear him again on that subject.

For some reason people tend to be so wrapped up in death and misery – probably because it gives them the right to pity themselves.

- This is so wrong.
- We must live as conquerors over death because we have been saved from death.

The Lord Jesus removed the powers of hell and death over us like Samson broke down the gates of Gaza.

In Romans 6:8 God teaches that He loves us.

- This means that He does not want to leave us in the hands of Satan where we ended up as a result of the Fall.
- In His love we must already experience the power of the resurrection.
- The Lord Jesus Christ is the guarantee for our resurrection.
- The Bible teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead for us and through Him we rule over death. (Romans 14:9)

For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

(Romans 14:9)

Our life after the resurrection is already envisaged. John 14:19 puts it very clearly:

A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.

(John 14:19)

The Lord Jesus lives forever and we will live forever.

- In a certain way it means that our life really only begins after this life. This is why Ephesians 2:4-6 teaches that we have already been raised up with Christ and that we are in heaven with Him.
4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
(Ephesians 2:4-6)
- God is so sure of our resurrection that our life after death is stated by Him as a fact.

When we die on this earth, it's only our bodies that die and that are buried in the earth for the time being.

- In the interim we then live with God as spiritual beings until the day God commands the earth to return our bodies.
- He will again unite your body and soul.

Next time you stand at a grave you know that the person being buried is in fact alive.

- The rich man saw his brothers living sinful lives and Lazarus was with Abraham while life on earth was continuing.
- The brothers of the rich man were still busy committing sin.

All of us are going to die, but do not regard it as the moment of final destruction and elimination.

- The grace of God changed death.
- Now it is a gate through which we have access to the hereafter,

Now, believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ because it is part of His salvation for us. Live to die so you can live with God forever when your bodies are raised from the dead.

Let us read Catechism Sunday 17 together.

45. Q. How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

A. First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, so that He could make us share in the righteousness which He had obtained for us by His death.[1] Second, by His power we too are

raised up to a new life.[2] Third, Christ's resurrection is to us a sure pledge of our glorious resurrection.[3]

[1] Rom. 4:25; I Cor. 15:16-20; I Pet. 1:3-5. [2] Rom. 6:5-11; Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 3:1-4. [3] Rom. 8:11; I Cor. 15:12-23; Phil. 3:20, 21.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Scripture Versification 2-3:1

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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