

# REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2013 EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** 68:12

*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: 119:29

**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 12-2:5

**Scripture reading:** Isaiah 54

**Scripture text:** Isaiah 54:11-13; Catechism Sunday 21

**11 "O you afflicted one, Tossed with tempest, and not comforted, Behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, And lay your foundations with sapphires.**

**12 I will make your pinnacles of rubies, Your gates of crystal, And all your walls of precious stones.**

**13 All your children shall be taught by the Lord, And great shall be the peace of your children.**

(Isaiah 54:11-13)

In the Old Testament we find a clear description of the broken and repentant sinner. In fact it is a description that corresponds with the description of the New Jerusalem we find in the book of Revelation.

Let us observe the grace of the Lord from the following angles:

1. **The grace of the Lord in the way He adorns His church.**
  2. **The grace of the Lord in the strength of the communion of saints.**
  3. **The grace of the Lord in the certainty that sins are forgiven.**
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1. **God reveals His grace in the way He adorns His church.**

In Isaiah 54 we read about a city described as so beautiful – completely beyond our understanding!

- A city built out of shiny white marble with purple cement on a sky-blue foundation.
- The entrances are of sparkling rubies.
- The surrounding wall is built out of all sorts of gems.

By these words the Lord describes the church of the future. Look at the image: The stones are selected collected, cut and polished and each one built into its own place.

Why has this been recorded? What is taking place in this passage?

- The bride of the Lord must be worthy of her Bridegroom, but she is not. Therefore she is decorated.
- Significantly it is put here that two things are taking place simultaneously.
  - Firstly the Lord adorns His bride.
  - And secondly by the same deed the Lord protects His bride.
- As such the bride is depicted in her eternal perfection – filled by the Holy Spirit.
  - All the elect stand before the Lord – reborn and in the fear of the Lord.
  - Everyone fully equipped for the task of eternally praising and glorifying the Lord.

From the New Testament we learn how these things were fulfilled – through Jesus Christ.

- He is the King and Saviour of the church.
- We confess that He has been gathering a church for Him from all generations – since the Creation and until the Second Coming.

This church is taught by the Word of God and guided by the Holy Spirit.

- This is how the Lord Jesus preserves and grows the church, because through the work of the Holy Spirit people are converted when they hear the Word of the Lord.
- And as life continues the Holy Spirit incorporates the chosen in the salvation of the Lord Jesus.
- When believers repent they live a life of becoming purified.
  - A life in which they turn away from sin.
  - A life in which they strive to conform to the likeness of Christ.
- In the same way it also happens when people fall into heresy and they repent through the work of the Holy Spirit and through what the Word of God reveals to them.

It is very easy telling you all this in a sermon but the believers who have to go through the mill to reach repentance and start becoming holy suffers much hardship.

- Because the elect regard themselves as having failed the test.
- Also they dare not just enter the holy Kingdom of God in this condition of taint and impurity, into which they were born, grew up and lived.
- They must first become worthy to enter such a holy place.

Therefore the almighty God purifies them through the Lord Jesus Christ – until they conform to the description of the beautiful city.

The content of this passage is therefore the end result of the redemptive ministry of the Lord Jesus.

- It is the fulfillment of our baptism, our resurrection and the atonement for our sins.
- The beauty of the bride of the Lord is the perfect fulfillment of our Lord Jesus Christ's redemptive sacrifice on the cross.

## **2. God reveals His grace in the strength of the communion of saints.**

There are a few things that unite believers, and one of them is the work of the Holy Spirit.

- The holy Spirit not only unites people
- but also links them to the gifts and treasures of salvation.

One of the effects of the Lord Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice is that we are able to love.

- To love means that we should not only receive; we must also give.
- In practice it means that believers are available for their fellow believers.
- The love for God must be reflected in our love for other people:
  - For example, through love we must practice the gift to forgive – not on certain conditions, but unconditionally.
  - And even through self-sacrifice in order to enable our neighbour to repair his wrongs.

Remember, the richer we become in Christ the more we will be like Him and able to forgive those who wrong us, and the more we can conform to His likeness.

*In living together with other believers and in the bonding and unity of our faith, God reveals the joy and glory of His presence among us, and we already see a glimpse of our being together in the Hereafter.*

## **3. God reveals His grace in the certainty that sins are forgiven.**

Since the Fall every person experiences the consuming doubt whether he will ever again be perfect and see the Lord. For this reason God comes to us and ensures us of His forgiveness of our sins and everything connected to it.

This is important because nobody can manage the judgement of God.

- There also is no person who does not fear it.
- Therefore it is such a deed of grace should the Lord ensure us that you, on the Final Judgement Day, will be justified by Jesus Christ.

Thereby the Lord practically tells what is written in Isaiah 54: The Lord protects and restores you in your glory. You can be assured that the Lord forgives your sins:

- Your sins of the past since your birth and what you inherited.
- Also your sins of the present time: the sins you have to fight daily.
- And the sins of times to come: the Lord will forgive you and will never think of them again.

Just think about what is written in Romans 8:1: **There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,** (Romans 8:1)

The Holy Spirit also testifies the certainty of faith we receive from the Lord.

**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God** (Romans 8:16)

We do not experience these things as acutely as it is recorded here in the Bible because we are still under the dispensation of sin.

- But beware that it will not remain as such. The Lord's Second Coming is near and everything will change at the bat of an eye.
- Therefore the Lord already calls us "saints" in His Word although we have not yet entered into His glory.

The Lord assures us of it all in His Word, which we read ourselves and what is preached to us.

- Thereby He also assures us of it all through His sacraments – the Baptism and Holy Communion.
- Through all this the Lord assures us that we share in His salvation and that the description of the city of the elect also applies to us.

Your glory is described in this passage. But, you are responsible for taking care that you are a living member of the church:

- Go live the love of the Lord.
- Go into the world and show your godliness.
- Go live joyfully and know that your sins are forgiven.
- And know through the Lord that you have conquered the devil and everything he destroys.

Know that the taint of sin sticking to you will be replaced by the glory of shining marble, of rubies and the glory of God's power.

Let us read together Catechism Lord's day 21:

54. Q. what do you believe concerning the holy catholic Christian church?

A. I believe that the Son of God,[1] out of the whole human race,[2] from the beginning of the world to its end,[3] gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself, [4] by His Spirit and Word,[5] in the unity of the true faith,[6] a church chosen to everlasting life.[7] And I believe that I am[8] and forever shall remain a living member of it.[9]

[1] John 10:11; Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11-13; Col. 1:18. [2] Gen. 26:4; Rev. 5:9. [3] Is. 59:21; I Cor. 11:26. [4] Ps. 129:1-5; Matt. 16:18; John 10:28-30. [5] Rom. 1:16; 10:14-17; Eph. 5:26. [6] Acts 2:42-47; Eph. 4:1-6. [7] Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:3-14. [8] I John 3:14, 19-21. [9] Ps. 23:6; John 10:27, 28; I Cor. 1:4-9; I Pet. 1:3-5.

55. Q. What do you understand by the communion of saints?

A. First, that believers, all and everyone, as members of Christ have communion with Him and share in all His treasures and gifts.[1] Second, that everyone is duty-bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of the other members.[2]

[1] Rom. 8:32; I Cor. 6:17; 12:4-7, 12, 13; I John 1:3. [2] Rom. 12:4-8; I Cor. 12:20-27; 13:1-7; Phil. 2:4-8.

56. Q. What do you believe concerning the forgiveness of sins?

A. I believe that God, because of Christ's satisfaction, will no more remember my sins,[1] nor my sinful nature, against which I have to struggle all my life,[2] but He will graciously grant me the righteousness of Christ, that I may never come into condemnation.[3]

[1] Ps. 103:3, 4, 10, 12; Mic. 7:18, 19; II Cor. 5:18-21; I John 1:7; 2:2. [2] Rom. 7:21-25. [3] John 3:17, 18; 5:24; Rom. 8:1, 2.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing song: Scripture Versification 19-1

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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