

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 2012 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 81:12

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: Psalm 103:9

Confession of faith: Nicene

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

And we believe one holy universal and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 89:17

Law

Psalm: 89:17

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 25:7

Scripture reading: Acts 2

Scripture text: Acts 2:28, 39; Catechism Sunday 26

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

(Acts 2:38, 39)

We must always understand the baptism against the backdrop of the Covenant.

- ◆ Because we fell into sin we caused the failure of the work covenant. Therefore the Lord had it going over into the covenant of grace.
- ◆ The baptism indeed also teaches the contents of the covenant of grace, namely that we need not work out our salvation ourselves because the Lord Jesus Christ did it and granted it to us in grace.

"Let yourselves be baptized" nowadays comes often under the magnifying glass because it is as if a stronger stream of people who have problems with the baptism and are having themselves re-baptized, are emerging from our own midst. In this sermon we consider the baptism on the light of the following:

- 1. The baptism consoles us in our miseries.**
- 2. The baptism reveals the glory of God.**
- 3. The baptism and our responsibility.**

- 1. The baptism consoles us in our miseries.**

The text is the answer to the question of a group of very scared and shocked people.

- ◆ It is the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit: The day of the Pentecost.

- ◆ Peter, strongly driven by the Holy Spirit rose and ministered a sermon to the people gathered there.

He preached that Jesus the Nazarene was appointed by God to work amongst them by powers and wonders.

- ◆ This Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.
- ◆ The wicked crucified Him.

The moment the listeners heard this the Holy Spirit moved them from inside.

- ◆ You could say that the cover fell from their eyes and that suddenly they realized the truth.
- ◆ They were the wicked that Peter was preaching about.

Suddenly they realized how they were led astray.

- ◆ They could also not deny that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Messiah because they knew about all the matters mentioned by Peter. Jesus arose from death –which is true!
- ◆ After His resurrection he also appeared to many of them. Possibly some of the people Jesus appeared to were amongst the people listening to the sermon by Peter.

The realization of this sin they committed cut like a sword through their minds.

- ◆ They crucified the Lord. What will the Lord now do to them?
- ◆ Fear took possession of their hearts. Dumbfounded they asked Peter and the Apostles: Brothers, what must we do now?

Herein we clearly see the work of the Holy Spirit.

- ◆ Firstly the Holy Spirit removes all grounds for own-justification from you.
- ◆ This is also right because the justice of God is relentless. You must know very clearly where you stand.
- ◆ The Lord does not do this to condemn us but so that we in fact may be saved.

Putting it like this may sound strange because how can a person roughly be pulled to the reality of your miseries and still claim that it is to our salvation? This is the way the Spirit of God works.

The signs of the Spirit at the descent of the Holy Spirit were wind and fire.

- ◆ The first work of the Holy Spirit joins herewith, namely to incinerate the sin and blowing your internally clean.
- ◆ The honesty of the Lord does not grant you the opportunity of cuddling your sins.

Only after there is the honest and real knowledge about our sins, then the door is opened so that we may come to repentance and conversion.

- ◆ Therefore Peter answered them that they must convert themselves and be baptized because the baptism holds great meaning for the converted.

2. The baptism reveals the glory of God.

The power of the baptism lies in the fact that it ministers the bliss and holiness of God.

In our confession we learn that the baptism is the sign and a seal.

- ◆ That means that the baptism is a sign of something.
- ◆ This something is the glory we have in the Lord Jesus Christ and teaches that the baptism is in fact the signature of God on the contract of mercy to us.

What is this glory in fact?

- ◆ It is the cleansing of our soul from impurities.
- ◆ Easier put: It means that our sins are forgiven by the death of the Lord Jesus.

This cleansing or purification of sin is symbolized in the baptism by water.

- ◆ There is a reason for the Lord using water: we use water to bath when we are very dirty.
- ◆ Because of this use water has the symbolic meaning of cleansing or purification.
- ◆ Therefore when baptizing we may only use water and nothing else.

At the baptism the water symbolizes that the blood and Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ completely purifies us to the face of God. All our spiritual dirt disappears so that we face God in perfect purity.

To be pure to face God is not just some emotional idea mankind devised through the times.

- ◆ God practices only relationship with the pure, in other words people who are purified from sin.
- ◆ Matthew 5:8 deals with this: **Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.**

Should we want to be very honest then we will have to realize that this judgement means that our sins are standing between God and us. Every person realizing this will experience the same fears as the Jews on the day of the Pentecost and implore: What must we do?

This feeling of doom is further amplified because not even during earthly life does the Lord tolerate an unholy in the midst of His congregation.

- ◆ Therefore the Lord commands His church to censure those who continue living in un-holiness.
- ◆ The purpose of the censure is that it is a deed of love aimed at moving people to conversion.
- ◆ Should they then not want to turn back, then eventually the Lord bans them from His church.

Who of us do not only realize the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ's redemption work after first obtaining full clarity about our own sins?

- ◆ That is exactly the process the Holy Spirit takes us through so that we may understand the redemption council of the Lord.

- ◆ He lets us understand that we are guilty of our sins and at the same time just how guilty we are and that in contrast therewith how the blood of the Lord Jesus redeems us.
- ◆ He lets us believe that we, who are so tainted by sin, will obtain a full place in the glory of God's kingdom through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Should these matters, for us who are religious, be too difficult to understand, how much more difficult would it be for the non-believer to understand these matters and come to conversion?

- ◆ The point is just that this salvation from sin and taint is true and that our part to the eternal life is also true and that the baptism assures us about it.

3. The baptism and our responsibility.

The baptism by itself is not salvation.

- ◆ The baptism is merely the symbol of the agreement the Lord entered into with us through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ◆ The content of this agreement is that we are spiritually cleansed in the way we are washed with water.

We must keep in mind that this promise of the Lord is lasting.

- ◆ The promise of glory does not break down the moment you turn away from the baptism font with your child.
- ◆ The promise is like the glory it stands for, It is very durable.

What is very important to keep in mind together with the baptism is that God the Holy Spirit lives in the person who is being baptized because the baptism is also the sign of God's covenant.

- ◆ Prior to the baptism the Holy Spirit already lives in us, but the baptism is the assurance of "us and our children" belonging to the Lord.
- ◆ Therefore we are baptized in the Name of the Triune God.
 - The Name of the Father confirms His love for us and the fact that He chose us.
 - The Name of the Lord Jesus Christ confirms that He paid for our sins and that we are atoned to God.
 - The Name of the Holy Spirit entails our complete humanity because He laid claim to us as His property and leads and guides us by His insight and presence.

The baptism visibly and audibly teaches us the glory of God.

- ◆ Visibly because we can see the sign of the covenant, the water.
 - Therefore the water is put in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit on the head of the child.
 - It is to understand it better because it is as if thereby the Lord Himself signs the contract of salvation with the child in face of the entire congregation.
- ◆ Further the baptism is audible, because from the mouth of the reverend we hear the promises of the Lord.
 - He inaugurates the baptized person into the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - He also awakes the baptized person together with Jesus Christ from the death so that he/she may live forever in His kingdom.

Suddenly the grace of the Lord attains so much meaning when with every baptism we hear that we have a inheritance in heaven – and without us having to earn it. In this way we get to know the glory of God in grace.

We can say the same about the love of God.

- ◆ The baptism teaches that the love of the Lord is set in eternity.
- ◆ Nobody can insert a wedge between the Lord and us.
- ◆ The baptism confirms that the Lord has fulfilled His love for us in Jesus Christ.

It is of course so that we now have the duty to be thankful and with our entire life thank the Lord for His salvation.. Herein the Holy Spirit assists us.

- ◆ He lets us persevere in the faith set into us by the baptism.
- ◆ He continually guides us in having the proper insight into our salvation.
- ◆ Therefore He leads us to discovering the sins inside ourselves, but at the same time also to experience the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ towards us.

We must always understand the baptism against the backdrop of the covenant.

- ◆ Because we sank into sin we caused the failure of the work covenant.
- ◆ Therefore the Lord had it go over into the covenant of grace.

The baptism confirms the content of the covenant of grace, namely that we no longer need to work out our own salvation because Christ has done it and granted it in grace to us.

All of us are baptized. Come, let us persevere in a life of prayer, conversion and thankfulness.

Let us now together read Catechism Sunday 26:

Q. 69.

How art thou admonished and assured by holy baptism, that the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is of real advantage to thee?

A.

Thus: That Christ appointed this external washing with water, (a)

adding thereto this promise, (b)

that I am as certainly washed by his blood and Spirit from all the pollution of my soul,

that is, from all my sins, (c)

as I am washed externally with water, by which the filthiness of the body is commonly washed away.

(a)

Matt.28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

(b)

Matt.28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Matt.3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

John 1:33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

Rom.6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Rom.6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

(c)

1 Pet.3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Luke 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

Q. 70.

What is it to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ?

A.

It is to receive of God the remission of sins, freely, for the sake of Christ's blood, which he shed for us by his sacrifice upon the cross; (a)

and also to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ, that so we may more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblamable lives. (b)

(a)

Heb.12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

1 Pet.1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Rev.1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

Rev.7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Zech.13:1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

Ezek.36:25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

(b)

John 1:33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

1 Cor.6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Cor.12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Rom.6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Col.2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Q. 71.

Where has Christ promised us, that he will as certainly wash us by his blood and Spirit, as we are washed with the water of baptism?

A.

In the institution of baptism, which is thus expressed: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost", Matt.28:19. And "he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.", Mark 16:16.

This promise is also repeated, where the scripture calls baptism "the washing of regenerations" and the washing away of sins. Tit.3:5, Acts 22:16. (a)

(a)

Tit.3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Acts 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Song: Scripture versification 8-1:1, 2

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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