

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 2012 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 45:1

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 92:2

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 19:7

Law

Psalm: 19:7

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 9:10

Scripture reading: Nehemiah 6:1-8 and James 3:1-12

Scripture text: James 3:5-8

5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.

8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

(James 3:5-8)

A few introductory remarks:

- ◆ In the Bible there are many judgements about the human tongue, but there are very few neutral judgements about the human tongue.
- ◆ The word "tongue" is only used to indicate the entire human.
- ◆ The Bible shows that every time things flow from the human tongue it is exactly the same as what he does and as what is living in his heart.

We will consider the following matters coming to the foreground in relation to the tongue of mankind:

- 1. My tongue and my sins**
- 2. My tongue and my neighbour**
- 3. My tongue and the Lord**

1. My tongue and my sins

The tongue is most certainly the thing causing the most problems between the Lord and us

- ◆ With the tongue we often say bad things against the Lord, things like slandering or the cursing use of His Name.

- ◆ Or we trespass against our neighbour when we often, in an image of the truth, slander or say bad things about another.
- ◆ Normally the story starts with: "**They say...**" That is not the straight road the Lord wants us to follow.

The Bible contains many judgements about the use of the human tongue. But the sad part is that the Lord has very few good words about our tongue.

- ◆ In Psalm 10:7 it is written that the mouth of an unjust person is full of cursing and deceit and fraud; under his tongue are mischief and vanity.
- ◆ Take note that the Lord puts it clearly that this person is a bad person.
- ◆ Further note the Lord listing a whole lot of sins, all dealing with what a person says.
- ◆ Thereby the Lord makes one matter very clear, namely that in the life of man that what you do and that what you say are always similar.

That is why the Bible teaches in Proverbs 18:21: **Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.**

- ◆ It is because you prove by your mouth where you stand towards the Lord and your neighbour.
- ◆ Should you slander God and your neighbour then you cannot lay claim to possessing the eternal life.

An example of this matter is clearly demonstrated in Isaiah 3:8 where the Lord teaches: **For Jerusalem stumbled, And Judah is fallen, Because their tongue and their doings Are against the Lord, To provoke the eyes of His glory.** Therefore they had to suffer the wrath of the Lord when He exiled them.

It is also so that what somebody says reveals something about his character.

- ◆ An example of this can be found in Psalm 12:3, 4 where it is clearly put that the Lord will **cut off all flattering lips, And the tongue that speaks proud things.**
- ◆ You could be surprised to know that such people reject the highest rule of the Lord. **They say: "With our tongue we will prevail; Our lips are our own; Who is lord over us?"**

This is the type of language we hear from the mouths of non-believers. A believer will never say such things.

- ◆ Not only do people with loose tongues slander against God, they also slander their friends.
- ◆ When your relationship with the Lord starts wearing thin then you not only speak badly about God, you also say ugly things about other people. (Psalm 15:3)

Getting treasures by a lying tongue is the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death. (Proverbs 21:6) Here the principle is that the person who gains wealth by lying eventually suffers from problems because the Lord Himself will bring it to the light.

People's tongues sometimes cause great damage – so much that the Lord Himself intervenes.

- ◆ In Psalm 31:21 we read that sometimes the Lord has to hide people with Him to protect them against the conspiracy of others.
 - So bad people are that God often has to intervene to protect righteous people.
 - The Bible then goes further and teaches that the Lord has to hide them against the pugnaciousness of people's tongues.
- ◆ This tongue we got to serve the Lord with is thus also used in fanning hatred.

That is why the Lord so sharply warns us (Psalm 34:14) to curb our tongues from the wrong and not to speak deceit.

2. My tongue and my neighbour

Psalm 57:5 gives us a dark picture of what the human tongue does against his fellow man.

- ◆ The author of this Psalm tells that he has to lie amongst lions, in other words he is being ill treated.
- ◆ He also writes about the people taking revenge onto him.
- ◆ He experiences his neighbor's bad-mouthing like spears and arrows hitting him and their tongues like a sharp sword.

The life-embitterment radiates from the words of others (Psalm 64:4, 9 – bitter words). Thereby their tongues often land them into trouble.

It often happens that one person lands another into trouble by all sorts of good stories and when the person who concedes wipes his eyes, he is in big trouble.

- ◆ Then he discovers that all the nice stories were nothing more than fraud. (Psalm 78:36 and Psalm 109:2).
- ◆ Such conduct causes serious damage to somebody else and does not keep in mind that your neighbour is an image-carrier of God.
- ◆ The Lord is very strict about such conduct and He punishes it severely.

The reason for the Lord's anger about damages against our neighbour is because it can only happen when somebody turns his back on the Lord.

- ◆ Jeremiah 9:3, 5, 8 puts it very clearly that somebody using his tongue to lie, slander, besmirching the good name of your neighbour and to commit deceit does not know the Lord (James 1:26)

A good example of such people and their way of conducting themselves is found in the conduct of Sanballat and Geshem we read about in Nehemiah 6.

- ◆ The truth was something completely different!
- ◆ In chapter 7 we read that Nehemiah brought back the temple-service at the stage when they accused him of wanting himself to be proclaimed as king.

About such people and what becomes of them – now and in the hereafter – is clearly revealed by the Lord, as an example in Revelation 16:10 and 11:

10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.

11 They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

(Revelation 16:10 and 11)

These verses describe what happened when the fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast.

- ◆ Then those who hated God gnawed their tongues because of pain.
- ◆ What is amazing is that they just continued blaspheming the Lord and did not come to conversion.

Is this not perhaps a very serious warning against people, who in this earthly existence do not know how to properly use their tongues to the glory of God and their neighbour?

3. My tongue and the Lord

Come, let us first consider how we fill our relationship between the Lord and our neighbour.

- ◆ Of course our first point is that we must protect and build up the honour of our neighbour.
- ◆ Even although we do not always do it correctly we normally have no problems with this principle.

But still there are problem areas.

- ◆ There is especially one large problem, and that is when somebody sins and we are witnesses thereto. What do you now do? How do I serve the glory of the Lord without landing into trouble with my fellow human?

For these instances the Lord has also prescribed a way of what to do.

- ◆ In Matthew 18 the road is highlighted that you must speak to the sinner about his transgression.
- ◆ Of course you cannot confront him with stories of slander, but only with facts.
- ◆ Should he not come to conversion and cease his sinful activity, then you must take a witness with and admonish him again.

Should the sinner become angry it would be his case with the Lord and he must keep in mind that if he is guilty and become angry towards a fellow believer wanting to win him for Christ, then at one stage or another he will have to face God Himself. That would entail very serious problems for him.

Should a sinner persevere then the matter must be revealed to the congregation – meaning the church council.

- ◆ If after their ministering he still refuses to come to conversion he must be banned from the congregation of God.
- ◆ That is then also symbolic of him being banned from the kingdom of God.

Should we conduct ourselves so correctly we do not expose ourselves to all sorts of wrong judgements or slander or even sin in the eyes of the Lord. *Then, from our mouths, the proper type of praise the Lord expects from us comes forth.*

There are many places in the Bible where it is clearly put that our tongue must be used to praise the Lord, by example in Psalm 35:28 where David sings that his tongue praises the justness of the Lord and together therewith also the praise of the Lord for the whole day long.

But there is one specific part in the Bible that cannot be passed by without focussing the attention thereon. This is Acts 2 – the morning the Holy Spirit descended.

- ◆ There were thousands of people gathered because on that day more than three thousand people were baptized.
- ◆ The group of people gathered there suddenly saw something that appeared like tongues of fire dividing and settling down on the apostles.

Then the apostles started ministering the gospel to the people gathered there in their individual languages.

- ◆ This was such a gripping event that it is written twice (verse 8 and 11) about the people hearing the gospel in the individual language of his birth.
- ◆ My tongue must praise the Lord and must minister the gospel to the salvation of my neighbour.

This descent of the Holy Spirit was the direct result of the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- ◆ Therewith the Lord Jesus, by way of a public event, made it clear that His victory over the devil has enabled us to also be victorious over the devil.
- ◆ But even more – our entire life-style can change from slandering and badmouthing to a totally other one where we praise and glorify God and bring other people to conversion.

The tongue is a body part making itself guilty of extremes. In the same way it can glorify the Lord from the heart, just the same can it also cause extreme damages – especially also in the church.

- ◆ James writes that you fit a rudder to a large ship to control it. Or you tame a horse by means of a bit.
- ◆ Mankind can thus get many and large things under his control.

But to bridle the tongue is a completely different matter. James calls the tongue a fire of injustice. Verse 8:

But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

It is something blaspheming the Lord, lying and besmirching the neighbour.

- ◆ It is a small flame that can put fire to an entire forest.
- ◆ It is something that can destroy the entire church of the Lord like a large forest having gone up in flames with only ash and smoke remaining.

The work of destruction can happen in many ways.

- ◆ People can slander about each other and cause the forming of little groups.
- ◆ The reverend can preach false doctrine.

- ◆ Then the other matter: the tongue does not only do damage when it talks too much and incorrectly. The believer can just keep quiet and say nothing when he has to speak.

In the Lord Jesus Christ we have the way.

- ◆ Let us also give enough attention to this matter in our congregation, so that we do not follow the wrong way with our tongue.
- ◆ The tongue is a small flame that can put fire to an entire forest.
- ◆ It is also something that has the death inside of it.

But it also is something that can glorify the Lord and win our neighbour over to the kingdom of God. Come, let us practice this last road in our congregation.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 66:1

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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