

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 15 DECEMBER 2013 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: 48:4

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: 98:1

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 33:11

Scripture reading: Psalm 96

Scripture text: Psalm 96; Catechism Sunday 36

1 O make a new song to the Lord; let all the earth make melody to the Lord.

2 Make songs to the Lord, blessing his name; give the good news of his salvation day by day.

3 Make clear his glory to the nations, and his wonders to all the peoples.

4 For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised; he is more to be feared than all other gods.

5 For all the gods of the nations are false gods; but the Lord made the heavens.

6 Honour and glory are before him: strong and fair is his holy place.

7 Give to the Lord, O you families of the peoples, give to the Lord glory and strength.

8 Give to the Lord the glory of his name; take with you an offering and come into his house.

9 O give worship to the Lord in holy robes; be in fear before him, all the earth.

10 Say among the nations, The Lord is King; yes, the world is ordered so that it may not be moved; he will be an upright judge of the peoples.

11 Let the heavens have joy and the earth be glad; let the sea be thundering with all its waters;

12 Let the field be glad, and everything which is in it; yes, let all the trees of the wood be sounding with joy,

13 Before the Lord, for he is come; he is come to be the judge of the earth; the earth will be judged in righteousness, and the peoples with unchanging faith.

David uses the language and words given to him by God to praise the greatness of the Lord on earth.

- The Lord did not give us a language only to converse with each other, He also (especially) gave it so that we must glorify and extol Him therewith.
- It is a special advantage we have to must and may praise God – that we possess a language with words, so that we can implore God for help in our misery. And to thank Him for all His grace.

But our language places us into an extremely high responsibility towards God.

- We get baptised in the Name of the Triune God.
- There we are earmarked as His property that has to truly worship Him.

The opposite is also often true. We neglect these good responsibilities and gifts. We are negligent in two ways.

- Firstly because we do not praise the Lord by mouth and tongue as we should.
- Secondly because we use His Holy Name – which was also given in our language – in vain.

This is the entire matter of the third commandment – the crux of the matter is that we often fall so deep that we just commonly abuse the Name of the Lord in our conversations, without us even realising it.

- It is a very serious sin to use the Name of God in vain.
- Vain use means that we use it in circumstances where it is clearly not used with the necessary respect and honour.

When in prayer and we call upon the Name of God it is with great respect and expectation. Then God also hears our prayer.

- Somebody who uses the Name of God to curse must see himself in relationship to God.
- Who is he speaking to when he curses? It cannot be to God because you only speak to God with great reverence.
- God listens and hears us when we call to His Name in prayer. But who listens should the Name of God be flung around in an ordinary conversation.
- Can the person cursing expect the Lord to lovingly care for us when we dishonour His Name or even shout it out?

Vain usage of the Name of God means that we literally make a fool out of God.

- We keep calling to His name, but we do not address Him.
- Consider the role of God the Holy Spirit in this matter.
 - The Holy Spirit teaches us to know the Name of God.
 - He teaches us to worship this Name.

- He also teaches us what to pray when we face God.

The one that uses the Name of God in vain must make sure that he uses the Name of God because the Holy Spirit inspires him to do it. And further also this question: In whose Name does he, who uses the Name of the Lord in vain, attend the church.

From the beginning the Christians have the habit of wishing each other well in the Name of the Lord.

- In the New Testament the people greeted each other by the word: Grace. Those who had a stronger Jewish background greeted by using the word: Peace.
- The apostle Paul joined the two together and therefore we read in the Bible that he greeted the people by the words: "Grace and peace for you!"

We greet in the Name of the Lord because He renders grace and peace.

- Such a Christian greeting is thus nothing other than a prayer.
- You pray to God for Him to grant grace and peace to this person facing you.

But again stands the person who uses the Name of the Lord in vain without this advantage, because how can he one moment insult God and the next moment implore Him to bless somebody.

- This is just not possible – such a person must live without blessing.
- He lives together with the wrath of God.
- You could say with good right that slander is a prayer to the devil. Because somebody who slanders confesses himself openly as an enemy to God.

The matter of slander and the vain use of the Name of the Lord go still further.

- The false oath the people take also falls under blasphemy and the vain use of the Name of the Lord
- When you swear an oath it means that you call in God as a witness to stand in for the fact that you are telling the truth.
- Should you swear a false oath then you call in the Righteous God of truth to stand in for your lie.
- You thus openly damage His sanctity. Therefore the Lord angers Himself about this kind of sin.

But now the matter goes even further.

- It not only deals with false swearing, but also unnecessarily taking an oath.
- The Name of God must be used very sparingly and with the highest reverence. He cannot be called in for every triviality.

This does not mean that we may not take an oath at all. On the contrary!

- The true oath is an acknowledgement and glorification of the Name of God.
- But the oath we just take in a conversation does not go to the glory of the God of heaven and earth.

Now it is certainly very easy to say that we do not share in these sins because we do not curse and we also do not swear unnecessarily.

- It may be like that – but what about the people using the Name of the Lord in vain in our presence.
- Our concern about the holiness of God must be so great that we should admonish these people in love.

We cannot just say that we have nothing to do with the matter because the sanctity of our neighbour and the glory of God is totally our concern!

- Should we thus just allow these sins and take no effort to prevent it, we share in these sins.

Take note of the following matter.

- Cursing comes from the heart.
- Should we then use the name of God to curse, it then proves that all we confessed in the Name of the Triune God is nothing more than lies because we are prepared to renounce this same God by slander.

Therefore we are threatened with punishment should we commit this sin. **“For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”**(Exodus 20:7)

- The justness of the Lord cannot be left unpunished.
- The patience of God cannot continue unlimited.
- Therefore these sins are punished. Severely. By eternal death.

In fact this is logical because who can expect that a cold-blooded sinner can live with God whose Name he used as a curse word? The hell is the certain destination of the transgressor of this commandment.

But this commandment not only prohibits the unholy use of the Name of God.

- It also commands us to the holy calling to indeed use the Name of God, because we must.
- But with reverence and deep worship.

In Psalm 50:15 we read:

Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."

Beloved let us then not test the patience of the Lord in this commandment.

- Come let us maintain the glory of the Names of God and also teach is as such to our children.
- Let us glorify His Name. And believe in His name. And pray in His name.

Let us read Catechism Sunday 36:

99. Q. What is required in the third commandment?

A. We are not to blaspheme or to abuse the Name of God by cursing,[1] perjury,[2] or unnecessary oaths,[3] nor to share in such horrible sins by being silent bystanders.[4] In short, we must use the holy Name of God only with fear and reverence,[5] so that we may rightly confess Him,[6] call upon Him,[7] and praise Him in all our words and works.[8]

[1] Lev. 24:10-17. [2] Lev. 19:12 [3] Matt. 5:37; James 5:12. [4] Lev. 5:1; Prov. 29:24. [5] Ps. 99:1-5; Is. 45:23; Jer. 4:2. [6] Matt. 10:32, 33; Rom. 10:9, 10. [7] Ps. 50:14, 15; I Tim. 2:8. [8] Rom. 2:24; Col. 3:17; I Tim. 6:1.

100. Q. Is the blaspheming of God's Name by swearing and cursing such a grievous sin that God is angry also with those who do not prevent and forbid it as much as they can?

A. Certainly,[1] for no sin is greater or provokes God's wrath more than the blaspheming of His Name. That is why He commanded it to be punished with death.[2]

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 105:1

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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