

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 6 JANUARY 2013 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 4:3

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: 119:7

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 84:6

Scripture reading: 1 Timothy 6

Scripture text: 1 Timothy 6:6-9; Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 42

6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

(1 Timothy 6:6-9)

This passage concerns dishonest ways in which to get rich. Some people are discontented with what they have, and then – in a dishonest way – they try to get hold of money or any other means they think might benefit them. In other words it's all about stealing.

In this sermon we look at theft from two angles:

1. The disposition of a person who steals

2. The commandment that we shall not steal – What does it entail?

1. The disposition of a person who steals

Before anybody commits a sin, something goes wrong in his heart.

- Something in his disposition towards God and his fellowmen disappears before he can think or do wrong.
- We should also bear in mind that it is very difficult to transgress only one commandment at a time, because all the commandments are linked together.
- It usually happens that when one commandment is transgressed, one or more of the other are also transgressed.

In the case of theft it definitely applies.

- A person will only steal when he has developed a desire to possess something to which he does not have a right.
- He then not only transgresses the eighth commandment, because he only steals after he has transgressed the tenth commandment – namely to covet what he should not have coveted.

Before anybody goes stealing many other wrongs occur in his life.

- For example, he is not satisfied with what God has determined in his life;
- or he's ungrateful for the blessings or possessions the Lord has allocated to him.
- This is why the apostle Paul specifically says that we should be content with the food and clothing the Lord has given us (v. 8).

This immediately endangers such a person's life twofold.

- On the one hand he commits hidden sins, and on the other hand he falls into crude public sins.
 - To understand the public part of it is easy. That is when somebody steals, is caught by the authorities and receives punishment for it.
- But there is another side to it. This is when somebody plans to get hold of what does not belong to him through wicked schemes and deceit.
 - We should remember that the Lord knows exactly what we think and what goes on inside our hearts. It could be possible to get hold of things we desire through fraud or even in secret.
 - And it could be that we are never caught in this life, but there comes a day when we'll stand before the Highest Judge, and then He will call us to account.
 - You must remember that we can not forever escape with the sin in our minds.

Theft is often hidden behind other things.

- You can, for example, steal by not giving to the Lord your rightful thanksgiving offering.
-] The church does not determine your contribution to the church – the Lord determines it in his Word, and if you do not adhere to it, you are holding back what the Lord regards as his own.

When we think of theft, more things enter our minds, for example greed.

- Greed is not theft, but it certainly has something in common with theft in the sense that it is the wrong way to deal with possessions.
- Also, the greedy person and the thief both appreciate possessions in the wrong way – both set a value on it higher than it should be.
- In extreme cases it could be almost a matter of idolatry.

The opposite is of course also true:

- One should not be greedy, but one should also not squander.
- The Lord's prohibition on theft also demands us to deal with our possessions in a responsible way.
- Squandering is irresponsible handling of money and therefore also sinful.

2. The commandment that we shall not steal – What does it entail?

This commandment is meant to maintain a sound relationship between the Lord and us.

- The Lord wants us to be satisfied with the way in which He manages our lives, in other words that we receive everything He bestows on us, from his hand with thanksgiving.
- The purpose of this commandment is also to maintain sound interpersonal relationships.
 - If anyone could take anything from anybody else as he wishes, there would be chaos and people would start killing others.
 - They would most probably wipe them from the face of the earth.

The aim of this commandment is therefore that we **should be humble**, totally dependent on what God ordains. This is what Paul speaks about in 1 Timothy 6:7. **for we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world**

* The commandment also demands **contentment** regarding all the gifts from God (verse 8):. **but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content.**

* Then it also demands **caution. Caution in faith.** Listen again to what is said in verse 9:

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

Here the Bible corrects our values. The Lord knows our values are often wrong because they are too fixed to things that are important to us on earth.

- Therefore the Lord says that earthly possessions can, after all, not be man's greatest gain.
- There is another form of wealth that has the greatest value – godliness.
 - This is a treasure in heaven, because it keeps your soul clean and keeps a sound relationship with God.
 - It protects you against pride, and keeps you from stealing your neighbor's earthly possessions.

The prohibition on theft can be redefined by saying that the Lord requires us to live sensibly so that we can truly enjoy what we have (little or much), and that we shall have peace with what God gives us in difficult times or poverty.

Jesus Christ's death on the cross was not in the first place for us to enjoy earthly wealth.

- His victory over death was that we would receive the abundance of eternal life in which we shall live each moment in the perfect abundance of God's omnipresence.
- This is also why we received the Holy Spirit – so that He will teach us about this abundance, so that we would not covet or steal earthly things of which other people have more than we have.

Let's read together Catechism Lord's Day 42.

110. Q. What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?

A. God forbids not only outright theft and robbery[1] but also such wicked schemes and devices as false weights and measures, deceptive merchandising, counterfeit money, and usury;[2] we must not defraud our neighbour in any way, whether by force or by show of right.[3] In addition God forbids all greed[4] and all abuse or squandering of His gifts.[5]

[1] Ex. 22:1; I Cor. 5:9, 10; 6:9, 10. [2] Deut. 25:13-16; Ps. 15:5; Prov. 11:1; 12:22; Ezek. 45:9-12; Luke 6:35. [3] Mic. 6:9-11; Luke 3:14; James 5:1-6. [4] Luke 12:15; Eph. 5:5. [5] Prov. 21:20; 23:20, 21; Luke 16:10-13.

111. Q. What does God require of you in this commandment?

A. I must promote my neighbour's good wherever I can and may, deal with him as I would like others to deal with me, and work faithfully so that I may be able to give to those in need.[1]

[1] Is. 58:5-10; Matt. 7:12; Gal. 6:9, 10; Eph. 4:28.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 146:6

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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