

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 23 MARCH 2014 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 66:2

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: 84:1, 6

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 25:2

Scripture reading: Philippians 4

Scripture text: Philippians 4:19; Catechism Sunday 50

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:19)

Our lives and our prayers must always show that the honour of God is much greater than our own. Hence it should be more important to us to glorify God in our lives than wanting Him to save us from our troubles.

In our previous sermons we looked at the meaning of the petitions Your kingdom come and Your will be done.

- This evening we focus on the petition in which we pray to God to provide for our daily needs.
- We look at various aspects that form part of this petition:

The first aspect of this petition is that we must confess the all-sufficiency of God.

- The Lord is almighty and nothing and nobody have power over Him.

- He can provide anything if He pleases, but at the same time He can also hold everything back from us if He pleases. - Just think about the three years and six months during which He held back all rain and dew in the time of Elijah.

Because of the Lord's eternal and immeasurable existence He can grant his grace as He pleases.

- He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Every day He feeds all the billions of people on earth - whether they are believers or not. When we pray we must acknowledge that the Lord is the Only Fountain of everything we need.

Of course we must also confess our joint dependence on the Lord.

- We may not pray in an arrogant way – some religious groups think they can force the Lord to meet their demands.
- Fact is that nobody can make any demands on God.

We can only have what the Lord has ordained for us – and this applies to all people.

- It is not true that the person who prays can determine whether his prayer can influence the Lord to a greater or lesser.
 - For example, that the Lord will hear the prayer of a rich man, much respected by the community, more readily than that of an old buffer.
 - The Lord hears and blesses whomever He pleases – beyond our understanding.

Have you ever thought about it that in most instances the blessings of the Lord are blessings in disguise?

- Who blesses you in such a way that you can enjoy your food?
- The Lord gives us all the things that we take for granted – and often we think that we can get these ourselves.
- Just consider your house, clothes, fuel for your car, work opportunities, physical strength and health. We are entirely dependent on God for literally everything.

Hence we must ask the Lord – every day – to provide for us. In faith we must focus on two distances.

- One is the horizon of the time when the Lord will be coming on the clouds of the sky, because then we shall be taken to Him and experience God's perfect glory and presence.
- The other is that we – in terms of time – must look at the very present time (today).

Hence we should pray to the Lord every day to care for us and protect us through the day because death is so close to us.

- We must live like the birds and the lilies – expecting everything from the Lord every day.
- For instance, we cannot pray on Monday and then expect the prayer to last for the rest of the week.
- We must pray to God every day – and ask for everything we need.

In these times we live in it is important to emphasize once again that, together with our prayers to God to provide for us, our calling is to work.

Everybody must work. This was the very first instruction the Lord gave us.

- In fact, the Lord uses the work we do to provide us with food and clothing.
- As long as we remember that work without faith and prayer does not guarantee a future. Consider the parable of the rich fool.

This does not mean that the Lord only provides when we work.

- It is possible for Him to provide anything, even by means of a miracle.
- But He wants it to be the norm that we accept our responsibility to work.

Our prayers can never be replaced by work or money.

- We must pray and work.
 - The Lord must be served and glorified through our daily work.
- The Lord specifically created us on earth where everything happens indirectly.
 - Bread does not drop from heaven. The Lord wants us to plough and plant and harvest in order to have bread on the table.
 - He blesses our work, because He lets the seeds sprout and grow – but within the framework of our obedience to Him.

Also we cannot pray for something and then sit back and wait for the Lord to provide it from somewhere.

- The Lord can perform miracles and He also does so
- But He does not allow us to be passive and to expand His grace to be our slave.

In the Lord's Prayer we pray for our daily bread. Maybe some of us don't quite understand what we pray.

- With those words we say that we are satisfied with what God gives us every day.
- Many people find it very difficult to accept that what they have is sufficient.

Our prayer must be sincere – free from factitious contentment.

- We must fully accept the Lord's blessing.
- But then we must also have peace of mind that we do not miss out on the Lord's blessing because we are too lazy or useless to work.

This verse from Philippians summarizes it all: **And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.** The richness of the Lord is immeasurably great.

- He fills us with it. In other words He provides everything we need.
- He not only provides sufficiently for this life.
- He especially provides abundantly for life hereafter because He blesses us with the glory of Jesus Christ.

This means that the Lord blesses us with saving grace.

- The Lord Jesus Christ's victory guarantees a life for us where there will be no deprivation.
- He prepares a place for us that is absolutely perfect. – A glory we do not deserve.
- This is glory for which He paid with his blood. A richness where lack of bread or clothes will have passed.

We must always remember that unbelief and discontentment spoil our prayer.

- That kind of attitude questions the Lord's ability to bless us and show mercy to us.
- Let us pray – fully dependent on the Lord – for everything we need and believe that He will hear us.

Let's read together Catechism Lord's Day 50.

125. Q. What is the fourth petition?

A. Give us this day our daily bread. That is: Provide us with all our bodily needs[1] so that we may acknowledge that Thou art the only fountain of all good,[2] and that our care and labour, and also Thy gifts, cannot do us any good without Thy blessing.[3] Grant therefore that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures, and place it only in Thee.[4]

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 32:1

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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