

## REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 2 JUNE 2013 MORNING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 23:2

*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 68:3

**Confession of faith:** Apostolic

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.  
And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy universal Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting

**Amen.**

*After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 25:6*

Law

Psalm: 25:6

**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 25:8

**Scripture reading:** Acts 8

**Scripture text:** Acts 8:26

**This is desert.**<sup>1</sup>

Where Sudan is today was known during the times of the Lord's crucifixion as Ethiopia.

- During those times the country was ruled by a series of queens all having the title of Candace – just as the rulers of Egypt were known as Pharaohs.

The minister of finance of one of them was en-route from Jerusalem back to his country. On a desert/lonely/wasteland road. Here the words have a very strong meaning.

- Not only is the road described as lonely
- It also describes the man's loneliness because he really was searching for God but was caught up into the lonely darkness of not understanding.

This man had a very noteworthy history.

- He, in the first place, was a eunuch.
- The queens of those times guaranteed their safety by having all males employed in their castles castrated.

This man then became involved with the Jewish faith and here also landed into a dead end because eunuchs were not allowed access into the temple.

- Now, with the Bible in his hands, he is on his way back.
- He is reading aloud from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, but did not understand what he was reading.

Then the Lord sent Philip to the man. At that stage Philip was in Samaria because he had to flee there.

Now consider all the important matter.

- The Lord calls Philip to proclaim the gospel.
- He receives a specific task to go to this man – this man who has come to conversion.

Now just a thought: what role does the fact plays that he was travelling when the Lord brought him to conversion?

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<sup>1</sup> The Afrikaans sermon uses the words: " ...**dit is 'n eensame pad...**" from the old Afrikaans translation - directly translated it means "this is a lonely" road. The translator was unable to find an English translation close to "lonely" The following translations were found: Bible in Basic English: *through the waste land* Webster Translation 1611: **which is desert** German Bible: **der ist öde**. "öde" in German means a very dry countryside. All the King James translations, and the American Standard Version refer to a **desert land**.

- He was en-route away from the temple but still wrestling with God.
- He wants to know and worship God – but from himself he lacked the power of lifting the lid of God's revelation and breaking through to God.
- In verse 31 he says: "**How can I, unless someone guides me?**"

Philip and this man conversed for a long time.

- They just started at the passage the man read from Isaiah.
- But they also spoke about the Lord Jesus and the extending of the church and Philip explained everything to the man.

Although not recorded here in as many words but logically reasoning: Why would the man have asked to be baptized had Philip not also explained it to him?

- The thus understood what the baptism dealt with.
- Therefore he experienced this great need inside of him; he longed to be baptized.
  - He wants to share in the salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - He wanted to be also included into this covenant of salvation.

With adults the baptism is a problem in the sense that not everybody could just be baptized.

- They must first know everything it deals with – they must first confess their faith.
- This is exactly what took place here. When the man voiced the wish to be baptized he first had to confess his faith – afterwards he was baptized.

Now we come to the essence of this sermon: What now?

- Where is the man now going to and what will he do with his faith?
- Should the travelling of this man have any meaning, how will his faith move onwards?
- Apply it to yourself, Are you with your faith and life really on your way to God?

For the sakes of completeness let us consider a few more incidents in the Bible where people travelling met the Lord. Let us consider a few examples from the Gospel as described by Matthew.

- In chapter 3 the baptism of the Lord Jesus is described and in the first part of chapter 4 the temptation of the Lord Jesus by the devil.
- Then the Lord Jesus' public appearance started. Chapter 4:17 onwards.

The Lord teaches that people must convert themselves because the Kingdom of the heavens is near.

- We find Him walking next to the sea.
- There He calls the first disciples.

They immediately abandon their nets and follow Him.

- Then they begin the road that in a certain sense also worked great loneliness to them.

- The lonely road of believing and preaching and founding churches whilst the world hates you and seeks your life.
- In the disciples we thus have an example of people called by the Lord and accompanying Him on His travel.

But we also have other examples. There were people who crossed roads with Jesus and who were not moved.

Consider the example in Matthew 18:18 onwards:

- A Scribe made it known that he wanted to follow the Lord but the demands were to severe and he cancels.
- Then there is somebody who first wanted to attend a funeral and then the Lord had to tell him also that he does not know what it is all about.

In Matthew 8 from verse 8 we have a case very similar to that of the Ethiopian. The possessed of Gadara.

- He is healed and comes to conversion but does not accompany the Lord.
- Here he differs from the previously mentioned case.
- But he also differs from them in the sense that he not like them is a non-believer because he wants to put conditions to his faith.

His journey also continued because he then returned to the city.

- He had to stay with his people to continue proclaiming the almighty power of the Lord Jesus!
- In this instance there is a similarity between the possessed of Gadara and the Ethiopian in that both took the Gospel of the Lord Jesus to their own people.

You could say that in this instance they were both apostles.

- Of course there is another similarity because both are heathens!
- Can you imagine the spiritual loneliness these two experienced amongst their own people seeing that suddenly they were internally so far removed from them?

But it is a different loneliness than what they previously knew.

- Can you imagine how lonely a person is should you not even know what would happen to you after your death?
- The loneliness of the heathens must be terrible.
- In the case of the possessed of Gadara that slept at night between the bones of dead people it must have really been terrible.

*Should we against this backdrop consider the loneliness worked by the faith should you be amongst non-believers, then you must just keep in mind that this loneliness has the richness of God's presence. This they could not tell before the time.*

There is also another case similar to these two, namely the woman from Canaan who we read about in Mark 15:21 onwards.

- Again the Lord is on a journey. This time in the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon.
- There this heathen lady approached Him and begged for mercy.

- She implores that she would even be satisfied should she only receive leftover grace.

She, together with her recovering daughter, also stayed behind in the heathen land to bear testimony of the great grace of the Lord.

In these instances a border was broken through in each case because it was either sickness or insanity destroyed by the Lord to thereby establish the faith.

The Lord also broke through social boundaries in aid of having saved people share in the faith.

- Think about the well-known case of Zaccheus who wanted to see the Lord but could not and then climbed into the tree and waited for the Lord to pass by. (Luke 19:1 onwards)
- Striking are the words of the Lord that on that day He had to stay with Zaccheus.
- Zaccheus was not the type of person every Jew would like to associate with.

*The point is just that in the movement somebody is converted and adopted. In fact all the people we mentioned were placed on a road of faith leading in the same direction even although they physically separated.*

Reconsider the Christ-preaching of this matter. It was like the Ethiopian read it and Philip also explained it.

- The Lord Jesus experienced a large amount of loneliness and oppression.
- In fact His loneliness was immeasurably large because how does the perfect God live with the sinful people in their world whilst they spend their days with hatred and viciousness?

Should we want to digest our own loneliness we must first, like this Ethiopian understand the loneliness of the Lord Jesus.

- Because the moment he understood it his own salvation fell into place and he was able to confess his faith and be inaugurated by means of the baptism into the fellowship of God.

Consider this man again: He experienced desperation.

- He did not understand what faith means.
- He reads about the suffering of Jesus, but it makes no sense.
- Until he understood that the suffering of the Lord Jesus was a completion of a task in which He had to bear the wrath and anger of God about all the sins of the believers. Even his (and thus also mine!).

Then he could also understand that it deals with the results of the matters we now have in Christ.

- Do you realize the almight of the grace of God and how it is also relevant to you?
- How do you now practice the communion with Him? Where is your faith taking you?
- Is our faith really still in motion so that we are on the way to God – so that every day we show growth and when we look back we can see that we have made progress?

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 4:2

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**

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Scripture Modern King James Version unless stated differently.