

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 12 MAY 2013 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Scripture Versification 20-2:6

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 147:2

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 99:4, 5

Law

Psalm: 99:4, 4

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 103L7

Scripture reading: Ezekiel 21**Scripture text:** Ezekiel 21:12**Cry and wail, son of man; For it will be against My people**

(Ezekiel 21:12)

The last words we hear about the former Eden is that Cherubs guard the entrance to the garden with the sword that flames and flickers, so that humans cannot enter there.

- This flaming sword that flickers is the symbol of God's punishment to man.
- Specified more closely: It symbolizes the death penalty pronounced over man, because had he wished to reenter the garden he would be killed by it.

But it also symbolizes God's punishment which we will have to suffer should we wish to again have access to His sanctum

- God's punishment of the sins of sinners is that dreadful!
- With a sword that flickers like lightening, He is going to work havoc amongst us.
- After He has slain, only then will His wrath be reconciled.

This passage tells of two terrible things:

- Firstly, it reveals the fury of God. It relates God's vengeance due to our sin.
- But secondly, it also reveals that we will not be able to bear the punishment because it is too severe.

Then we realize: Someone else will have to endure the punishment.

- We must cry and howl, as it has to do with our sin.
- We must however not cry and howl merely because we dishonour the Lord with our sin!
- We must howl and cry because these sins of ours will bring over us such awful violence!

Ezekiel already lived in Babel when he wrote down this prophecy.

- He was carried away together with the first group of Jews. Even though they were already in Babel, they still kept on hoping that Jerusalem would not be destroyed.

- Then the Lord revealed to them that Jerusalem would indeed be destroyed! The Lord can do no different, because their sin is too much.
- The Lord portrays His fury as a sword. The sword will bring about the destruction of various nations, but especially of Jerusalem.
- The judgment of God will not remain only outside of the church. It will also be pronounced over the church itself!

The Jews in Babel understood the image of the sword very well.

- They knew Babel's military might intimately.
- But what had to have been a terrible shock to them was that the Lord was going to use precisely that, as the instrument of His judgement!
- The Jews reckoned everything outside of Jerusalem as being outside of heaven.
- At once, they had to now realize that the Lord had also the strength of the heathens in the service of His honour.

Thus the Lord announces His judgment.

- The heathens are so much in the service of God, that the Lord says that it is He, who draws His own sword.
- He is so angered, that He will not sheathe His sword.
 - He will slay with it continuously.
 - For those who do not want to hear, the worst suffering is yet to come.

Verse 7 describes us in our sin:

Every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water.

The description has to do with two situations.

- First it describes how we landed into doing sin.
- We were no match for evil. We were unwilling. Our hands and knees were not in the service of the Gospel.

At the same time, it also describes the state that develops when we commit sin.

- Our hearts melt from fear, when we are faced with God's anger at the sight of evil.
- Hands limp in its impotence against the omnipotence of God. The hearts and souls of men become dull because the devil makes man increasingly blind to God's truth.

Thus everyone stands powerless before God.

- Thus Israel stood before God, and we too stand like them before the Lord.
- Powerless against God's punishment.

Then the Lord Himself starts to speak. He tells of a sword, which He has prepared.

- The sword is sharpened and polished.

- With great care the Lord prepares the sword, to thereby show that with equal care He will also exercise His wrath and execute His punishment.

It's frightening to think on it. Verse 11 says:

And he (God) hath given it to be furbished, that it may be handled: this sword is sharpened, and it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer!

In the first instance the Lord is speaking of the Babylonians.

- To them the Lord lent them military might with which to kill the Israelites, and carry them away.
- But just so God gave the power and means to Satan, to one day mutilate disobedient people in hell.
- Satan is the one who kills. The one who has no interest in life.

Thus is the situation. That is why man must cry and howl.

- This judgment is not against the reprobate alone. It is against us too – God's people!
- Because stated plainly: we must be punished because we deserve to be. What type of God would He be if He were to just look the other way in the face of all the unrighteousness?
- He forgives, but He also punishes! And the punishment is not easy.

The sword is taken with both hands, and as they come forward, the people are then simply cut off.

- The people who appear, are cut in two at the hip. It is a shambles says the Bible.
- In His punishment of man, God's judgment is like a lightning bolt.

I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the LORD have said it. This punishment must be carried out to appease God's wrath.

That is what happened on Golgotha.

- The Lord did not want to cut down His elect with His shiny sharpened sword, as we would not have survived such a punishment.
- That is why the Lord Jesus Christ was punished in our stead.
- The wrath, which He had to carry, was similar to that of the described battlefield: terrible, cruel and bloody. So much so, that His blood even had to drip from the holes made by the nails.

All of this had to be, so that God's wrath would be appeased.

In Ezekiel the punishment is announced in four parts. From verses 8 tot 11 the sword is portrayed as the killing power. **This is the first part.**

- The speed at which the people in Jerusalem will fall, is described. They are the people inside the church.

- There were those Jews who thought that those inside of Jerusalem would suffer no punishment.
- Just so, there are those people who think that it's more than enough to belong to a church.

Your end is not averted by your membership to the church. Everyone – those inside and those outside of the church – disobedient to God, are punished.

The second part is sketched in verse 12. **Everyone must lament.** In God's fury, there is place for only tears and heartache.

The third part of the punishment is described in verses 14 to 15a.

- The sword must now be taken in both hands, and with the speed of a lightening bolt must be wielded this way and that.
- The murderousness of the sword is tripled.

The fourth part is drawn in verse 15 to 17.

- The sword does not cease. It continues until God's fury is satisfied.
- Here the judgment is presented so powerfully that another is no longer wielding the sword. It is God Himself.

This punishment describes to us what all happened from Jesus Christ's birth, until His death on the cross.

- Satan's temptations became increasingly fierce.
- The wrath of God all the greater, until it reached its height when the Lord Jesus hung on the cross and cried that even God had forsaken Him.

It gets dark

- It gets dark - pitch black in broad daylight. So severe was the punishment that Jesus had to suffer for our sake, that not even the sun could give its light.
- Which is the grace and mercy we must remember each day - mercy that God grants us through the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The fact that Jesus Christ took upon Himself all of the punishment for all God's people.
- When in our grief, we were supposed to have cried and howled because we were denied entry into heaven, and because we could also not bear the terrifying wrath of God. This all He did for us!

Now we must rightly howl and cry for joy because Jesus bore this terrible anger, and because our sin is thereby forgiven.

- Now God's wrath is appeased.
- Now our place in His eternal dwelling is prepared.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 66:8

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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