

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 29 JUNE 2014 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 81:17

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 32:6

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 us men and 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 at 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 in 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 25:9

Law

Psalm: 25:9

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 89:2

Scripture reading: Genesis 38

Scripture text: Genesis 38:25

When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "By the man to whom these belong, I am with child." And she said, "Please determine whose these are-the signet and cord, and staff."

(Genesis 38:25)

God the Holy Spirit had this shameful chapter in the Bible recorded to teach us thereby that none of us could boast in his own justness because that would be audacious. Furthermore also so that none of us need to despair in the enormity of the violence of our own sins – there is forgiveness.

But this is not all. There is a powerful revelation of God hidden in this passage of Scripture.

- We are here taught about the pernicious influence the heathen nations had upon Israel.
- By this the Lord reveals that His children should be segregated so that their faith could be preserved because amongst the other nations they would lose it because all sorts of wrong things are added.

In the history of Joseph we have seen the Lord using him to let His children, who were at this stage just a large family, go to Egypt.

- The question then immediately arises why it had to happen that His chosen children had to live amongst the Egyptians.
- This passage of Scripture teaches us the reason.

There are certain noteworthy things in chapter 38

- Firstly the fact that this piece of history took place after Joseph was sold.
 - The matters told about here took place since the arrival of Joseph in Egypt, the times he was in jail and also during the times when he became second in charge in Egypt
 - The famine also occurred during these times.
- The second fact is that Judah is no longer living with his family.
 - He exchanged the house of his father for the company of the Canaanites.
 - He befriends a man named Hirah – a man definitely not good company for him.
- Thirdly Judah became lax in his faith.

- He married a Canaanite woman. Her name was Shuah.
- Three sons were born out of this marriage. Er, Onan and Shelah.

According to the customs of the Canaanites Judah took a wife for his son. Tamar. Also a Canaanite.

- A lot was lacking in the religious training of the children of Judah.
- We read that Er, his eldest son, was evil in the eyes of the Lord.
 - We do not know what the sin was – we can make deductions, but we do not know for sure.
- The fact is just that he lived sinfully and the Lord killed him.
 - There is no son to propagate the name of Er.

To the people of those times it was an important matter should a man not have a descendant because the entire matter of the possessions of the father came into play. If there is not a son the possessions go over into alien hands and the family dies out.

Therefore, in the laws of Moses we read about the wedding of the brother-in law. (Deuteronomy 25:5- 10)

- This means that the wife of the dead brother becomes the wife of his younger brother and that he must give children to the wife so that a son may be born to carry on the tribe.
- Such a son that is then born receives the name of the dead brother to thereby ensure the further existence of the tribe.

This also happens in our passage of Scripture.

- Judah commands his second son, Onan, to marry Tamar.
- The wedding is thus completely legal and lacks nothing because there were no children.

The law that works here also made provision that such a brother was allowed to, should he not be willing, not marry the wife of his brother.

- Onan had no objections – he agrees to marry Tamar but denies having children with her.
- The crux of the matter is that he wanted to use her body to satisfy his urges, but denies her her woman's rights.

This made the Lord very angry.

- Onan knew that a son out of this wedding will have the name of his brother, and he did not want his son to have the name of his brother.
- Therefore the Lord also killed Onan. It was not a natural death. Here it was the punishment for his sins.

Then we see the danger in the conduct of Judah.

- The life amongst the Canaanites had him starting to believe differently than what is right.

- According to law he must have his youngest son marry Tamar. But Judah did not agree.
- He is superstitious. He believes that something or another is wrong with Tamar, therefore she has caused the death of his two sons.

Then he does Tamar a massive disfavor. He promises her that she may marry his youngest son. But only later. The son is still too young.

There is more behind this matter than meets the eye.

- It means that Tamar is engaged to Shelah – then she is considered as a married woman whilst she still is a widow.
- She may then only go about in mourning-garb or clothes befitting a widow and she had to remain in the house of her father.
- She was also not allowed to marry another man.

This was severe punishment for Tamar – she had done nothing wrong!

- Soon it became clear to her that she would have to spend her life devoid of children and unmarried because by that time Shelah was grown up and nothing was done about her rights.

This Tamar did not want to marry only to satisfy her body – to her it was something else.

- She wanted to be inaugurated to the chosen people.
- This was the sole reason for her wanting a son.
- Seemingly she had a good insight into the religion of Jacob and his home.

But Tamar also knew her father-in law well.

- Seemingly he was a man who did not only had a reputation, and also no longer exercised his Israeli faith truly.
- Therefore she falls in with the faith of the Canaanites.

She does two things that are proper according to their faith.

- Firstly she disguised herself as a whore. During those times there were many of them – they were worshippers of Ashtoreth, the goddess of love.
 - To them it was a religion and a grave matter.
- The second is that the Canaanites, like the Jews, also had the wedding of the brother-in law, but they took it further.
 - They said that the father-in law of the wife must marry her should the sons not have a son with her.
 - Therefore Tamar planned this matter with Judah.

In the meanwhile the mother-in law of Tamar passed away and her father-in law became a widower.

- She also received word that he was on his way to shear his sheep.
- This meant that Judah would be in a good mood because the shearing of sheep was an occasion of festivities to them.

Tamar took off her clothes as a widow and disguised herself as a woman of low morals. She waited on the road where Judah had to pass.

Then we get to now Judah in his weakness. He fell into the trap set for him.

- But Tamar is wise enough to demand a security.
- She knew well enough that in those times the punishment for such an offense by a widow was the penalty of death – firstly she would be stoned to death and then her body would be incinerated.
- And she *also knew that the law required her husband and her father-in law to deliver the judgement over her.*
- Furthermore she also knew that the man, should they discover who he is – had to die together with her.

Therefore she demanded from Judah his signet, cord and staff. To a Canaanite these were his most precious belongings. Without it he was open to ridicule.

The matter became known and Judah was informed that his daughter-in law was pregnant.

- Immediately he sees his chance of getting rid of her.
- Without waiting he commander that she had to be incinerated.

Then the big moment arrived.

- Tamar was escorted from the city to be killed.
- All the people surrounded her because they had to help with the stoning.
- Judah is also present. He has to be there to act as the judge executing the sentence.

Then Tamar took out the securities.

- As a woman, and as the convicted, she may not open her mouth, but she has somebody else with her speaking on her behalf.
- At this critical and tense moment the man takes out the signet, cord and staff of Judah to the eyes of all the people.
- He hands it to Judah whilst everybody is looking and tells them that it belongs to the father of her child.

Beloved, can you imagine how all the people suddenly stood closer to see who the man is. He would now have to be removed from them and killed together with her.

Then the shock. The goods belong to Judah!

- At that moment he might have died of shame because suddenly it is known to all that he secretly committed adultery whilst he had to act like a widower.
- And then he must have explained what this is all about and Tamar would have been granted a chance to speak.

Then he confessed his sins: He did a grave injustice to her.

- Now everybody understood why Tamar acted in that way – she wanted to proclaim that she was robbed from her wedding rights.
- Based upon the intent of this matter the punishment is not executed.

Thereafter Judah apparently took Tamar into his house but withheld himself from her.

- Then twins were born. The name of one is Peres because he was the firstborn.
- This Peres is one of David's, and therefore also one of Jesus Christ's forefathers.

This passage teaches us about the will of God regarding Jesus Christ.

- In the Heidelberg Catechism we confess that the descent of Christ to hell was His entire suffering throughout His life with the last few moments on the cross as the height of the suffering.
- We find the beginning thereof already here with Tamar.
 - The Lord wanted Christ to be born out of the tribe of Judah.
 - Judah also has other sons and grandsons as well – but God wanted Him to be born out of Peres who was conceived through incest and whoring.

It is part of the Lord Jesus' humiliation that He comes from a very weak family.

- The worst ignominies occurred amongst the people listed in His genealogical table.
- Together with Tamar we can name another three such women.
 - Just think about Rahab the harlot.
 - Ruth who also partook in the marriage of the brother-in law and
 - Bathsheba who committed adultery with David whereupon the two murdered her husband to hide the shame.

Therefore we learn this great truth: No person has something out of himself to boast. We all live a Tamar's life.

- But on the other hand we do not need to sink by the realization of the massiveness of our sins.
- No, as like there was salvation from death for Tamar and her children, thereby indeed salvation for us as well arrived.
- From this saved tribe the Lord Jesus Christ, who had to suffer indescribable misery and loneliness and death for our salvation, was born.

Directly after the birth of Tamar' twins Judah left the Canaanites and returned to Jacob and his family.

- Then the buying of grain and the relocation to Egypt took place.
- Here the Lord teaches that we must not boast in our own powers. The hands of all of us are blackened from sin.
- But God is merciful and when we repent He forgives us all our sins.

But there is something else.

- Guard against mixing with people who estrange you from God.
- People who teach you all sorts of habits that close your eyes for the sin so that you later partake without noticing it and without it bothering you that you are sinning.

The life of many is a life filled with worldly joy, gifts, drunkenness and worldly pleasures.

This whilst the Son of God came into the world to suffer misery so that our wayward life can again get direction with God.

Prior to birth He was already disqualified by the world.

- Firstly His family and his genealogical table counted against Him.
 - Nobody wanted a Christ (Saviour) born from a tribe of despicable whores and crooks.
 - The world wanted a Christ in glory.
- Further there were a few animals around the Lord Jesus Christ to bring Him praise as the Son of God when He was born – the crowds of the world were not there.
- It was a moment of misery – a Tamar' moment. Those for whose salvation He came were all absent.

Therefore God sent the angels.

- If the people were not glad about their salvation, the angels, who rejoice in heaven when one sinner converts himself, were.

In secret the Lord Jesus received a visit of honor by the Eastern wise men.

- It must be kept quiet because should this honor becomes known the Son of the highest God would die – another Tamar' moment.
- Then the shepherds came – the simple. Those who arrive lacking wealth and luxury. The poor.

These disgraces of the world that is to be saved by this Son of God are far greater than the sins of Tamar and Judah. This is what happens should believers start thinking and believing and expecting like the world.

- It is a far blacker happening.
- Then this Child has to flee for His life to the heathens in Egypt because those who He came for murdered all children to ensure that He will also die.

From this you learn what God expects from us in our lives of faith.

- Our life must be a life free from the falsehoods and semi-believers around us.
- People who understand the thankfulness of the salvation by God do not have place for hollow joy, because the day the Lord Jesus comes again He gives perfect joy to those who do not allow the worldly life to swallow them and let them not be given over to evil matters.

Expect the Lord Jesus now with fear and shuddering because He is no longer the Man of misery.

- He is now the God who rules in glory over death and life.
- He is now the God of judgement – His work of love is already completed.

When He now comes, He comes in the clouds to judge over everybody and their work.

- Then He will cast those who exchanged their faith for the world into the eternal death.
- But – more important – He will gather those who have remorse over their injustices to Him.
- He will take up in His glory those who were able to resist the temptations and who are thankful that He was so humiliated that He was born out of Tamar, the adulteress.
- It is the people who are thankful for the things that happened to the Lord Jesus, so that He thereby could bear the curse of God, which actually we deserve, so that He can have us in joy to the face of God.

Do not boast in your lack of sin – it is false.

- We all live like Tamar and Judah.
- But also do not remain in sin.
- The Lord Jesus Christ was in fact so accursed and humiliated since His birth so that for each one of us there can be redemption.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 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