

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 22 DECEMBER 2013 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 33:1

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 89:1

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 40:4

Law

Psalm: 40:4

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 118:12

Scripture reading: Haggai 2 and Hebrews 12**Scripture text:** Haggai 2:9

The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former
(Haggai 2:9)

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.
(Hebrews 12.28)

Christmas is the celebration of God's fulfillment of the covenant of grace.

- Through the birth of Christ the fulfilling of the wobbly matters of this word coming to an end, started.
- Thereby the arrival of God's solid and eternal kingdom became a reality.

In the passage read from Haggai the Israelites were very despondent. The Lord approached them to bring new hope to them.

- They must rebuild the temple.
- To them this rebuilt temple is the symbol of the reality of God's promises for the future.

But they did not receive the promise that they could relax and that the promises of God will just fall from the skies.

- The Lord says that they must work hard and be encouraged because He is with them.
- This is an age-old promise: It was given at Sinai.
 - There the Lord said: You are My people and I am your God.
 - There they also received a token that the Lord will dwell amongst them as sign that they are His children: The tabernacle of the Lord was erected amongst them.
 - But later the people entered the Promised Land and the times of the tabernacle tent ran out. Then the temple became the symbol of God's presence.

He worship of the people deteriorated and they received a token thereof – as a receipt of their account of guilt.

- Their temple was destroyed and they were banished to Babel.
- The symbol of God's residency was destroyed.

This is why we find the despondent people where they are standing about in the former capital.

- They came to the dreadful discovery that they were living in a world where nothing is stable.
- Everything here on earth is moving about: Kingdoms come to rule but then just as fast fall to pieces.

Then consolation arrives: The Lord is again with them!

- The proof thereof is the temple that was to be rebuilt.
- But this temple lost the meaning it had earlier.
 - It now became a prophecy of a promise to be fulfilled.
 - It is a promise of a new paradise that will arrive.
 - It prophecies a new kingdom of God where nothing will again be so unstable and moveable!

Verse 5 puts it very clearly:

'According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'

(Haggai 2:5)

- Therewith the Lord ensures His care over them.
- He will guide and rule them with His Spirit.
- The Spirit of the Lord which is amongst them will render upon them the power and dedication to rebuild the temple,

The prophecy goes towards a climax.

- Before this kingdom of God wherein nothing can any longer be shaken He will again let the earth and heaven tremble.
 - The entire creation will come into movement.
 - All the earthly things will be shaken to a fall.
- Then a new creation will arrive.
 - A new heaven and a new earth.
 - This temple they have to build is the symbol thereof.
 - Like this demolished temple is rebuilt, so eventually a new earth in the Kingdom of God will come to be.

But the fulfillment of this promise will be preceded by massive movements in nature and in the world of the people.

- It started with the birth of Christ.
 - The heavens broke open and the angels rejoiced on earth because the Son of God was born.
 - They rejoiced with songs because the One came into the world that will start erecting the Kingdom of God.

- With His crucifixion it also was like that.
 - When He died on the cross the earth shuddered in fright. The rocks tore and dead people arose.
 - In the middle of the day the light of the sun fled away.

In verse 22 the Lord supplies further information on the events that will precede the heavenly kingdom of the Messiah.

...I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms...

(Haggai 2:22)

The instability of the world is thus a product of Christ's crosswork!

- This is why the one kingdom after the other will arise and then fall.
- Every time the Lord removes the throne from them because they are all gentile kingdoms. This is what is prophesied here.
 - This is one of the grants of grace we retained from the birth of Christ!
 - He was in fact born so that the power of the world will crumble through the times.
 - He was born to be the start of the end of this world and everything unsteady.
 - He was born so that He could start building a kingdom of God that is steady and elevated above instability!

Many of us celebrate this Christmas with a dark mood. What will become of us? It seems as if the world (everybody) is again anew turned against us who believe in Jesus. Thereby the Christians are so deeply divided amongst themselves! Everything in this world is so wrong!

Of course it has to be like that. This in fact is our consolation. Should it not have been like this, we should have been worried.

- The fact that indeed the world is in this state is the proof that God's interventions in this world are going into fulfillment.
- The word is not producing stability for us.
 - It provides a life of double standards and the uncertainty of everything is build upon doubt and faltering principles.
 - Therewith God is telling us that the writing for this world is on the wall.
 - He is busy removing the thrones of the kingdoms opposing Him.

This in fact was the promise of Christmas:

- Whilst the earthly power and grandness is falling apart the temple of God receives all the glory.
- Together with all this apparent adversity the Lord fills us with the glory of His grace.
- The wealth of Christmas lies therein that that day a tangible start was made to bring the promise of the presence of God and of His Kingdom to be.

The arrival of Christ on Christmas day was indeed not the full fulfillment of the promise. It was the start of the fulfillment.

- Therefore that promise must still develop further.
- The development comes out in that the Lord tells us to go to work and to believe.

- We must work until the kingdom of God's presence replaces this world with all its inconsistencies.
- This is the promise of Christmas day that still must be fulfilled!

Haggai teaches that God came to live amongst His children. This is the true Christmas, when Christ comes to live amongst the people.

- Therefore Jesus trains the disciples to establish churches and start in the entire world.
- This promise of the Lord coming to live amongst us will be fulfilled in that the church eventually will be congregated at the Lord on the New Earth.

Therefore the outside of the church in Jerusalem during the times of Haggai is not so important.

- The church of Haggai only testified that Jesus is coming.
- Then Christmas arrived: The Lord Jesus came to reveal Himself in the church to us.
- But His promises reach so far that at the end of sight even the times of the earthly church has run out.
- The fulfillment is when God lives amongst the people:
 - When the tabernacle of God is amongst the people and He dries the tears from their eyes.
 - When the kingdom of Jesus Christ disposes eternal joy for those who accept the arrival of the kingdom of God.
 - The fulfillment is for those believing in the Son of God: Those who believe that He was born on earth to execute this redemption task, provident task and re-creation task. In other words for those who believe in the promises of Christmas.

Christmas was the ministering of grace and redemption.

- The grace existed in that the promises of God's occupation then became a reality.
- The meaning of Haggai's words is also clearer should we regard it as such: The future glory of this house will be greater than the earlier – because Christ is inside it. And because it eventually will consist out of the presence of God.

The first Christmas was thus the beginning of the fulfillment hereof. We now expect the second Christmas. The final fulfillment of the kingdom of God. The arrival of Jesus Christ on the clouds.

- We are waiting for the promise of Hebrews 12:28. The kingdom is busy entering an irresolute world.
- The kingdom of God will come by shaking this world to its foundations and to overturn all existing orders.
- Christ has already done it in principle. But the power of His work is still invisible.

At the birth of the Lord Jesus the angels jubilated because they knew that soon they would see how the doors of hell are broken down.

- They sang because the chosen are saved from doom.
- They then already knew how we would be brought to glory.
- But the first Christmas is over. Now we only have the invisible promises.

- We are now awaiting the second Christmas – the Second Coming of Christ: the finalizing of the promises to Haggai.
- Through the first earnings of Jesus Christ we become a royal priesthood when He comes again. Holy people who must sing to the attributes of Christ.
But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1Peter 2:9)

We celebrate Christmas. We celebrate our awaiting of the Second Coming.

- We are thankful that we are able to do it because the work of Christ is still continuing and we commemorate it by Christmas until the Lord again arrives in the clouds.
- Every year we remember by Christmas our richness in the Lord Jesus Christ!

But even the promises of God are not without the demand for responsibility!

- We are called up to be thankful for all the grace over us.
- We must exhibit a responsible gratitude by serving the Lord with pleasure and to be devout and God-fearing
 - Make it a life resolution to serve God with more zeal than as what we did up to now – if that is possible at all,
 - Give onto God the deserved respect because He does not only promise, He executes every promise!
 - Fear the Lord so that the message of Christmas does not pass us by!

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 116:1

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

Dr MJ Du Plessis
 Helping Reverend
 Reformed Church Clanwilliam
 22 December 2013
 Scripture: Modern King James Version