

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 14 APRIL 2013

MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 107:18

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

Scripture Versification 1-1:5

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 25:2

Law

Psalm: 25:2

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 1:2

Scripture reading: Isaiah 5

Scripture text: Isaiah 5:4

What more could have been done to My vineyard That I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes?
(Isaiah 5:4)

We do what we are supposed to do, but many times in such a way that it is just an imitation of how it should be. Sometimes we are like this vineyard bearing wild grapes instead of good grapes.

In the times when this sermon by Isaiah was delivered there was literary speech confusion in the church front.

- Many things were said – the correct things, and also completely incorrect things.
- The people were so confused that in some instances the proper things were considered as wrong whilst the wrong things were regarded as correct.
- Many foolish actions took place under the wing of right and justness.

In verse 20 the Lord says:

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

In this way the Lord refers to people doing the wrong things but then pretending that it is correct.

Now the Lord continues: there are people even doing worse things than that!

Let us listen to verse 21:

Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!

Arrogance and self-overvaluation played an important part in the large sinful condition.

It came to pass that during those times many words were thrown around.

- On the street the truth stumbled.
- The conduct of the people was just only at the skin of what was right.

For the sakes of the balance of the sermon you must keep in mind that not 100% of the people committed all the sins. It was exactly like in our congregation.

- Some stood stronger than others in certain instances of sin.
- Possibly there were a few people badly guilty to all sins.

But there were also the just – of whom Isaiah and his fellow prophets was very strong evidence. But when the Lord turns Himself to His church-people He addresses them as a whole about all the sins being committed amongst them.

Isaiah presented this sermon in a very specific way. He made the entire sermon into a song and then sang it to the people.

- The song is in a form of a story. He sings about his beloved who owns a vineyard.
- He did everything possible that could be done in cultivating and caring for the vineyard.
- He tilled the soil and removed all the stones.
- Then he planted choice vines in the vineyard.

The Gardener went further.

- Not only did he look after the vineyard very well – He cared so well for it that He turned it into a work of art.
- Firstly He started this vineyard on a sunny hill with enough sun and from where it would be a beautiful sight.

He also built a tower in its midst.

- From the tower He could better oversee His vineyard.
- The wine vat for the vineyard was hewed out of stone and also placed inside the vineyard.

A vineyard could not have been better prepared.

- Now the Beloved, about whom Isaiah sang, awaited the harvest.
- In one sentence the expectation of the Beloved is described:
Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes?

Something impossible took place in the vineyard!

- *Choice vines bore wild grapes!*
- *Wild grapes are small sour grapes that cannot be eaten.*

Possibly the people enjoyed the song because up to here they did not realize what it dealt with!

- They feel good because in verse 3 they were called upon to judge whether the Beloved or the vineyard is right!

In verse 3 there is also a complete change of direction in the song of Isaiah: up to now Isaiah sang about the Beloved, but from verse 3 the Beloved Himself has the word!

"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.

- The Beloved draws the attention of the listeners to the fact that he did everything possible for the vineyard.
- Therefore He now asks: what more must I still do?

The Beloved is God. The vineyard is the church – as it then was displayed by Jerusalem and Judah.

- This is also relevant to our congregation because there are strong similarities between Jerusalem, Judah and us.

- The Lord did everything for His people. Granted them their own land, fruitfulness and great grace.

The church has always been blessed with not only material matters but especially with spiritual grants as well.

- We have the Word of the Lord.
- We have faith.
- We have the Love of God – He, out of love, even disciplines us so that we may listen!

What more must the Lord do to let us bear fruit?

*Like Jerusalem and Judah we are not just people walking the earth.
We are choice vines – taken up into God's covenant of grace!*

But the listeners to Isaiah did not yet take the matter up like that.

- Therefore together they had to judge about his vineyard. They had to first determine their own punishment.
- The Lord says that He will destroy the vineyard. He will remove the wall and the thorn fence.

There was always a wall surrounding the vineyard and then they also planted thorn bushes outside of the wall to keep the wild animals and thieves out.

- The Lord will now remove this protection so that the vineyard – His ungrateful church – may be overrun.
- The church is thus subjected to the external influences!

The Lord will further aid this destruction.

- He will command the clouds not to rain over it and the thorns and thistles can overgrow it.
- The people are satisfied with the judgement over the vineyard.

And then the shock hits them. Verse 7:

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant!

The Lord wanted to enjoy Himself in His garden, but the fruit stayed away! There was fruit, but the fruit was bad! The Lord names different things that are bad fruit in His vineyard:

- He waited for justness but the people spilled the blood of the innocent!
- They stayed awake till late at night and had parties: they drank and made music!

In verse 18 the Lord describes by shocking words how bad His people are.

- They tied the sin with cart ropes and then pulled the sin closer to them.
- Then they challenged God to continue with His work! They said that the Holy of Israel can be near, it does not matter.

Now the results of their teasing of God have arrived.

- The Lord will punish them and remove His love from them.
- The heathens will overrun them: that is the thorns and thistles later growing in the vineyard and smothering the vines.

From verse 11 onwards the important people are blamed for not understanding the gravity of the times.

- They are at the doorway of destruction, but says Isaiah, there are people starting drinking early morning and that are, due to the heat of the wine, still awake late at night.

This text was of course later fulfilled when the Lord sent the people into exile.

- The part of grace was also later fulfilled when the Lord sent His Son to work in the vineyard.
- He gave His life so that this vineyard could bear good fruit.
- He had to die for the choice vines that could not fulfill their calling else His Father not prune them and burn them together with the weeds.

What more must I do asks the Lord.

- After the death of the Lord Jesus Christ God sent His Spirit.
- Each one of us is guided through life by Godly guidance.

Let us be honest about our mutual compassionate fellowship. In essence our congregation does everything that must be done here.

- But moments arrive when we must be extremely honest about our lives.
- How compassionate are we towards each other? Are you aware of the battle experienced by some of our members? We forget that when we move ourselves away from those in pain we are standing outside the community of faith.

Now let us observe our congregation – the vineyard of God – from a different side.

- We are doing well.
- Still that is where the danger lurks. When we are doing well it is the time for sleeping lightly – because then the wrong things stalk the believers.

The warning that we must be careful and sharpened is based on what happened to the believers during the times of Isaiah.

- Choice vines became, without anybody clearly noticing it, wild grapes!
- This can also happen to us. Therefore we all have to be very wake-up in maintaining a living relationship with the Lord.
- We must exercise and hone it daily.

How can we expect the Lord's Second Coming should thorns and thistles overgrow our congregation?

- No, we cannot, because the Lord will eventually destroy any believer or church as a congregation should we falter and her fruit of faith become scarce.
- In the song of Isaiah such believers that falter and fall behind are indeed judged.

Observe what we have:

- We have the advantage of living free from fear of death because the Lord Jesus Christ saved us from the death.
- We have received the forgiveness of our sins through Him without us having to earn it ourselves.
- We have the working and presence of God the Holy Spirit!

Around us people are becoming more and more unfaithful – or they sink into false faiths!

- Those matters have an influence on all people – also on believers.
- Therefore we must realize who and what we are. We are choice vines – and we are grafted onto the True Vine.

Do you still remember the Lord Jesus mentioning it in His last sermon?:

John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

John 15:4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Thus our calling is to live to the glory and honour of the Triune God who planted us as choice vines in His land to witness Him with our entire lives.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Song: Scripture Versification 2-4:2

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