

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 8 DECEMBER 2013

MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 47:1, 3

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 100

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 68:13

Law

Psalm: 68:13

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 78:1, 2

Scripture reading: Isaiah 8:23 – 9:6 and 1John 4 and 5

Scripture text: Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

(Isaiah 9:6)

During the times when the Lord revealed all the matters we have read about in Isaiah to him everything (the land and its people) around Isaiah were in a grip of fear and misery. As the Lord does always He now also did: He revealed to those who He loved that on the other side of their suffering He has a better future for them.

Of course the Lord has by what He reveals to the prophet, not only one time and one single event in mind!

- He indeed reveals that firstly after the punishment time for the children of Israel has run out they again will receive His blessing.
- But the matters being prophesized reach further than only the Banishment and that history – it reaches right through up to our future and us!
 - From verse 5 the Lord clearly reveals the saving work of the Messiah.
 - He even reveals the Person of the coming Messiah by compounding events and Names onto each other.

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The Messiah/Christ goes far above the normal human understanding by Him being described by words that cannot normally exist together in one sentence.

- He is **Child** and **Son** and **God**. (A child that has been born but at the same time powerful God).
- At the same time He is **eternal** and works everlasting peace – of course including salvation.

The key that unlocks the Being of the Messiah is the first two descriptions:

- **For unto us a Child is born**
- **Unto us a Son is given**

Let us firstly consider the prophecy around the word **Child**. The revelation starts off as if it is very normal: a child is born. Of course. This is nothing extraordinary because children are born at any rate.

- Still there is something outstanding about the birth: The words **unto us**. Why is the child born **unto us**? All children are not born **unto us**. They are normally born onto their parents.

- Our question thus remains unsolved: who are the “us” and why is the Child born “onto us”?

The answer is that the “us” are indeed sinful people. We are the chosen of the Lord who would without the intervention of God be lost because our entire lives are tainted by sin and overflowing with evil.

The answer is further that the Messiah firstly will be a Child born onto mankind for the people. This part of the revelation underlines the humanity of Jesus Christ. Later the book of Revelation describes the event as such:

She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

(Revelation 12:5)

Like the children of other believing parents of those times He was also circumcised and blessed in the temple when His parents brought the prescribed sacrifice.

Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against.

(Luke 2:34)

It was indeed a blessing plus a prophecy:

Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel...

The Child must fall: Eventually He had to go to the cross. The hand of the evil forces was against Him right from the beginning:

For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together

(Acts 4:27)

Revelation 12 shows us that Satan directly drove these people!

But this Child was also to be resurrected from death for the sakes of many in Israel – the chosen people! In the New Testament the Holy Spirit reflects upon the history and then addresses the people of the church by the following words:

"To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

(Acts 3:26)

We again listen to the prophecy in Isaiah 9. We investigate what the Holy Spirit means by the words: **Unto us a Son is given.**

- The Child that was born unto us was not our Child.
- He was a Child for our sakes. He was the **Son** of Somebody Else. That Person gave His **Son** unto us.

The word Son in the first place does not deal with the sex of the relevant Child. This word underlines the greatness of this Child. He is the Son of God that was given to us.

He was since eternity God Himself. He was there since ever. Then God did what we cannot fathom by our human mind. He generated the Son.

We confess this by the following words in the confession of Athanasius:

- The Father was not made, created or generated by anybody;
- The Son was not made or created by the Father only but was generated;
- The Holy Spirit was not made, created or generated by the Father and the Son but goes out from Them.

The Holy Spirit puts this deed in our Bible by the following words:

"God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'

(Acts 13:33)

So it came that the second Person of the Deity as Son accepted a human body to save us. The Lord had it recorded as follows:

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

Galatians 4:4)

This verse in Isaiah (9:1) thus summarizes the humanity and Deity of the Messiah in one announcement.

- Whoever does not understand this cannot understand the rest of the names and descriptions.
- In the remainder of the description it is indicated Who this Son was and what powers He had – and therefore could do things outside the abilities of a human.

Christmas is thus an event with a message. It is the one day that summarizes our joy because God, through the arrival of His Son, came to make our salvation and recreation true and real.

- Our salvation and our hope and our future is summarized in the Name: Jesus Christ.
- This is why the gospel is ministered by these exact words to the Jews in dispersion:

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

(Hebrews 1:1-2)

This son has the eternal rule. The expression in Isaiah 9:**And the government will be upon His shoulder** is an idiom to describe the royal cloak hanging from his shoulder to the ground. The apostle John saw the Messiah in heaven dressed exactly like this:

and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

(Revelation 1:13)

John did not only see the Son of God clothed in a royal garment around His shoulders

- He also saw Him in His capacity of saving ruler.

- He saw Him in the violence of His wrath by which He destroys the hell and its powers so that those for which He died can receive and enjoy the perfect glory He as God prepared.
- John saw Him where He in His Deity almight is making a new heaven and a new earth.
- He saw Him where He resurrects the dead and unifies them with their bodies.
- John saw the crowds dressed in white clothing glorifying and praising this God till eternity.

This is why Isaiah called the Son **Wonderful**.

- He is just far more than the normal human.
- He exceeds all limits of power we have any understanding about.
- The name **Wonderful** denotes the superhuman Godly Being of the Son of God that was given to us.

At the same time this Son is **Counselor**.

- This reveals that the Son of God, as God compiled His own Council and executes it Himself.
- He knows what is indispensable to those He loves and He sees to it that He gives it to them.

Will there be anybody or any power preventing the Son of God from doing this work? No, because He Himself is the **Mighty God**. Observe how the Lord puts it in the letter to the Hebrews:

6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire."

8 But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom."

(Hebrews 1:6-8)

The Son is thus nobody else than God Himself. The Holy Spirit announced it like this to Isaiah: This Son is **Eternal Father**.

- His rule is the rule of God.
- Because He is God, He and everything He does is eternal!

Stephen also saw Jesus in His Deity.

- During his last moments the Lord strengthened the eyes of Stephen so that he was able to see his final address.
- Between a hail of stones he looked up and said what he saw:
"Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"
(Acts 7:56)

Consider this: He was born to die and to arise so that we have a way out of our miseries, following Him into His eternal glory. This is why the last name is: **Prince of Peace**.

Is the peace that the Son of God came to make meant for all people? This Child born unto us answers Himself:

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

(John 17:12)

The son was given to work salvation. He saves us who were given to Him by God!

- Differently put: God thus renders us salvation and acquittal by Him Giving His Son to us.
- Thereby the relationship between God and us is totally changed. Where previously it was a relationship of punishment it is now a relationship of atonement. Just consider the words of Romans 5:10:

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

(Romans 5:10)

In Colossians 1:13 the Lord puts this event of salvation even sharper:

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

(Colossians 1:13)

The salvation calls us up to responsibility.

- We must confess the Saviour.
- This justification attained by the Lord Jesus belongs to us if we believe in Him.
(Belgic confession article 23).

Consider here the discussion between Jesus and Martha:

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

26 "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Her confession immediately follows:

27 She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

(John 11:23-27)

We thus do this by our remembrance of the birth of the Lord Jesus' confession of God's love for us. We confess it by the words of the apostle John:

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

(1John 4:9)

That we might live through Him!

Therefore is our celebration of the birth of Christ at the same time our confession:

- We confess that the Child that was born is the Son of God and that He Himself is God.
Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.
(1John 2:23)
- The child that was born for us, who is also the Son of God, came to also make us into children of God.
 - He puts us into eternity, into a relationship of childhood to the Eternal and Almighty God.
 - But He demands from us faithfulness and steadfastness of faith.

The Holy Spirit had all these matters clearly and understandably recorded in the Bible – for a fixed reason:

but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

(John 20:31)

Our Bible closes its last pages by this call up in our ears:

"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

(Revelation 21:7)

We expect the Son of God to return to us. With a great difference to His first arrival: When the Lord Jesus comes again He does not come as a Child born for us again.

- We expect Him in the fulfillment of His work as the eternal Judge. The Almighty Eternal Ruling Son of God.
- We expect Him as the Prince of Peace that will finally install the peace because He at that moment will cast the hell and all its relations eternally into hell and seal it up so that there will never ever come any umbrage into being.
- At that moment the Lord will Himself give to us, who confess Him, a reward out of grace that will have such glory as what the human heart could never think up.
- Therefore we expect this great day with a strong yearning to fully enjoy the promises of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 98:2, 4

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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