

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 13 JULY 2014 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 73:5

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 32:1

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 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 25:10

Law

Psalm: 25:10

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 68:10

Scripture reading: Jeremiah 31. Read also Ezekiel 18: 1-9

Scripture text: Jeremiah 31:29, 30

29 "In those days they shall say no more: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge.'

30 "But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

Jeremiah 31:29, 30)

The Lord Almighty vows that a day shall come when people will no longer be able to shift their responsibilities on to other people.

- Each one shall stand before Him and be answerable for himself.
- What will then become of those who deny God's righteousness? And of us who know what the righteousness of the Almighty demands of us but fail to act accordingly?

In the book Ezekiel the consequences of the sins of Judah and Jerusalem are shown clearly.

- The judgment that is to come is inevitable.
- The people would not listen while the time was there to listen to the preaching of the prophets and to the Law of the Lord.

Not all the Israelites embraced the new religion. Not at all.

- It is true that many of them began to worship many idols and no longer worshipped the Lord.
- But many of them simply let go of their faith and worship.
 - They just did nothing.
 - They fell into an attitude of indifference and laxness.

This raised the Lord's wrath and He punished all the people.

- When they were in misery the people realized that worship of the Lord is a serious matter which cannot be lightly cast aside.
- But they still refuse to accept the blame for own irresponsibility. Someone else was to blame.

It is so typical. The responsibility for abandoning God is moved onto somebody else.

So it was with the Lord's people in the Old Testament.

- The question was raised as to who was to blame for their misery.

- It could not be they themselves – all that remained was their forebears.

It is still customary in Syria to eat sour grapes and the eating of such grapes sets one's teeth on edge.

The Israelites used this metaphor to describe their situation, which they considered to be unfair.

- Their fathers ate the sour grapes and now their, the children's, teeth are on edge.
- Actually they are saying that God is unfair by punishing the wrong people
- Their forebears ate the sour grapes, not they!

This is written in Ezekiel 18:25:

'The way of the Lord is not fair.'

Here lies the grave error we still fall in today.

- We decide for the Lord what He should do and what not.
- And our decisions are based on what suits us – as was the case with Israel.

God is almighty and such a thing is simply impossible. Accordingly the Lord answers Israel immediately:

"Hear, O house of Israel: Is my way unjust? Is it not your ways that are unjust?"

In verse 26 it is said plainly that if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin he will die for it.

- For the people these were hard words because it meant that they alone were responsible for their sins and nobody else.

They now had to know that with their proverb about the sour grapes they tried to circumvent the Lord's punishment.

- They blunted their own conscience by trying to shift the blame to someone else
- And the Lord wanted to sharpen their conscience!
- By His punishment He wanted to bring them to their senses so that they might have remorse for their sins and repent.

The prophet Jeremiah prophesies that reconciliation will come someday.

- The Lord will remove their misery.
- The people who now are sighing and languishing in exile will receive succor.

The Lord says in Jeremiah 31:28:

"And it shall come to pass, that as I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy, and to afflict, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord.

(Jeremiah 31:28)

The Lord's punishment will end.

- But this does not mean that the punishment can be circumvented. No, the Lord watches to punish where it is necessary.
- But when the punishment is done, then the Lord Himself restores us.
- Then the Lord has already removed whom He does not want to be part of His people and the unrighteous have been destroyed.
- Then only the perfection of the life eternal remains.

There the reproach of the sour grapes eaten by the fathers will not be mentioned before the Lord.

- Because those who are there will know that they were punished for their own sins.
- And because they showed true remorse and repented because they acknowledged their guilt, they were saved.
- Those who had no remorse and did not repent were punished for it.

Verse 30:

"But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

So everybody is held responsible for his own deeds.

But we must see these matters in the Bible in context.

- It is true that the Lord holds everyone responsible for his own deeds.
- It is also true that parents can call down God's wrath onto their children.

This statement in Jeremiah is in line with the Second Commandment, namely

- That the Lord punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him! (Deuteronomy 5:9)
- It is therefore not only the generation that lives now that shall bear God's wrath, also their descendants.

See how it works in practice.

- The Lord punished the Israelites for their sins by sending them into exile.
- What happened to their children born in Babylon? It is because the Lord's punishment extended to them that they were born outside their fatherland.

But the duty to repent rested on them. They had to turn away from the sins of their parents. They had to worship, pray and live righteously because they saw the consequences of sin and obduracy.

We read that they refused to repent.

- They did not want to know that they too had to repent.
- All guilt was that of their parents. They had eaten the sour grapes. And now their children's teeth are set on edge.

The preaching of Christ of this text is what we read in Jeremiah 31:28.

- The Lord's punishment culminated in the punishment Jesus suffered.
- He was beaten and destroyed so that the Lord could restore His people. Because Jesus was destroyed for the sins of the people.

The punishment is now over.

- Accordingly the Lord can now build and plant His people.
- And that is why we must reflect on our sins.
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We shall be punished for our own sins.

- Other people cannot eat sour grapes and so cause us to be alienated from God.
- Everyone who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge, so says the Lord!

We all must listen when the voice of the Holy Spirit chastises us when we sin.

- The teeth of any person not wanting to obey the Lord in full responsibility are set on edge by the sour grapes he eats himself.
- Such a person wandered away from God.

Reflect upon this and start by doing soul-searching with repentance with the eye on the nearing Holy Communion of the Lord.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 138:1

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

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 Scripture: Modern King James Version