

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 1 DECEMBER 2013

MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 107:4

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 103:3

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 130:3

Scripture reading: John 6

Scripture text: John 6:33

"For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

(John 6:33)

Life can follow one of two directions:

- He can work and strive towards all he needs to make a success out of his life. To such a person this becomes the sole rule of life.
- Or he works so that he can still comply with all the daily responsibilities of his life, but he does this all firstly for the sake of the Lord.
 - Such a life demands a lot.
 - You must be specifically tuned in to be able to see to it that the way in which you handle every facet of your life furthers the glory of the Lord.

The big problem is that we are so tuned into this life that we often only perceive the physical matters.

- Often we forget that life continues at the other side of the grave and then do not look after that part of our lives as well.

This is of course not a matter that only started up for the first time in modern times.

- The people, who faced the Lord the day we have just read about, had exactly the same problem.
- This is why the Lord immediately told the people who came to Him that they only came back to Him because their stomachs were filled the previous day – they did not return because they believed in Him. (Verse 26)

What He in effect said was that the people with Him did not understand that He, through the miracle of the augmentation of the bread, in fact revealed the eternity to them.

Then the Lord starts with this sermon in which He uses the known fact that to live, you have to eat.

- Hereto the Lord joins in explaining to the people that somebody who wants to live for ever must also eat, but he has to feed on a different kind of food: The faith in salvation by the Lord Jesus.

This sermon by the Lord encompasses various points.

- Firstly there is the very direct statement that our aims in life are wrong and then therewith the admonishment that we must not seek perishable food but the food which endures to everlasting life. (Verse 26,27)
- Then there is the statement that He is the Bread of life and that He descended from heaven to save the people coming to Him.
- Thereafter follows the statement that on the last day the Lord Jesus Christ will resurrect these people.

Hereby the Lord of course gives a future perspective to the people who believe – they will be resurrected to be with the Lord.

- Nothing is mentioned about those who do not accept the Lord and thus do not come to Him.
- But the silence about them clearly contains the judgement over them!

This sermon clearly has two elements: A negative element and a positive element.

- The negative is the admonishment about our life style.
- We may never live in such a way that we full time build onto the matters only important for our life on earth, that we do not see the matters of the hereafter or not render enough attention to it.

Therefore the Lord then said:

He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. (John 6.35)

Our entire life must be tuned onto the Lord! Then the people inquired how they could manage that. (Verse 28)

- They also wanted the Lord to give them a sign.
- They say that their predecessors ate manna to stay alive in the desert.
- This they considered as a sign given to them.

What sign proving anything about life can the Lord give them?

The Lord uses this occasion to then explain to the people that He is the One giving life.

- But not in the same way as they understood it – they were looking for a sign like the manna.
- But the manna sustained life for only a day because the following day they were hungry again and would eventually have died of starvation had the Lord not again given manna.

He gives life that is entirely on a different level.

- Should He give food to somebody then that person would not hunger or thirst again. (Verse 35)
- He thus continues living without being again dependent upon food.

Can you imagine the surprise of the people gathered around the Lord upon hearing such a statement.

- Where have you ever heard about somebody who can eat something rendering him everlasting life?
- At that stage the Lord had their attention. Therefore He immediately stated in verse 35:
He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

Jesus is the bread. He is the Giver of life.

- But He expects from us to make this gift of life into our own. We must believe!
- The people surrounding the Lord then immediately understood that He referred to spiritual food.
- Somebody who is spiritually fed will not fall around like somebody who is hungry and continually looking for food.

In verse 27 it is written that we must work for food that does not perish.

- Here it is very clearly accented that we ourselves will have to spend a lot of energy on this matter.
- Not to gain our salvation – that the Lord Jesus Christ has already done.

But we now have to claim this everlasting life for ourselves. Man must believe and convert himself through the grace he receives from God. (Canons of Dordt Chapter 3&4.12)

Some of those people facing the Lord also became witness of how God gave us the Bread of Life.

- That day they did not yet know where and how they would obtain the Bread giving everlasting life.
- But later they saw how it is given.
 - They witnessed the miracles Jesus did.
 - They saw what all took place when Jesus was crucified.
 - They also experienced it becoming dark in the middle of the day.
 - They saw how graves opened and how the dead arose and appeared to the people in the city.

In all these wonders they saw the prelude of the power by which Christ opened up eternity for us. And simultaneously how He slammed shut the doors to hell so that we can never again re-enter there.

Thus they indeed became witnesses to how God gave us the Bread of life.

- Later they also saw it in the resurrection of Jesus.
- Then they also knew what the Lord referred to when He said, on the day we read about, that He gives the eternal life to those who believe in Him and that on the last day He would resurrect them.

Because they saw that He arose from death.

- Indeed the grave was empty.
- They understood that the Lord would also resurrect them in that way.
- In verse 27 it is indeed written that God the Father gave Jesus the power to do so.

Here the Lord told in plain language about the grace He renders us so that we may have eternal life.

- Note how this sermon of the Lord flows by itself into the celebration of the Holy Supper.

- As it is written in verse 35 the Lord spoke about eating bread and about never thirsting again.

In verse 53 the Holy Communion is brought even clearer into play:

... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.

Holy Communion is the celebration whereby we remember how the Lord earned us eternal life and that He grants it to us.

- The message of Holy Communion and the message about the birth of our Lord Jesus – His becoming a human – are the same: He comes to save and redeem us from the punishment our sins bring upon us.
- Therefore Christmas is to the true believer a celebration where we already, in the present, see the arrival of eternity.

For the moment just keep in mind that our faith in our salvation cannot be separated from a true faith. The true faith rests upon two legs namely:

- knowing where and with whom you obtain eternal life and
- furthermore that you truly trust the Lord in His promise that He will give you eternal life.

We also ask: How do I know that I have the true faith? This is the same question the people put to the Lord on that day.

- The answer by the Lord is also the same: the true faith does not only look at the earth.
- It is not how the faith of those people was that they only wanted to eat to be filled.
- The true faith is a way of life wherein the glorification of God and service to the Lord is the only objective.

The true faith drives you to the One who gives you the bread! The Lord Jesus Christ.

- He descended from heaven to live and die and hand out life.
- He has the power to do so –you need not doubt that.
- But at least you must live and believe like somebody who receives all this grace!

The Lord says that such people must come to Him. Verse 37 puts it in the best words possible for the human ears:

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

(John 6:37)

The Lord does not close His eyes and ears to us.

- But then we must approach Him with total submission.
- It is not true that the fact of the Lord saving you puts no claims to you – in fact because we are redeemed we must give all that we are and have, give to glorify the Lord by our faith and the living out thereof.

Our faith must not be as such that we want to gain advantage on earth thereby.

- The attitude and faith in which we approach the Lord Jesus must be totally different – it must glorify and worship God.
- If we follow this aim, then through the grace of God we penetrate the barriers of time.
- It then becomes timeless and cannot be fastened to earthly matters like manna and only food for every day.
"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. (John 6:35)

NEVER! And never is a very long time! Never is till eternity!

In other places the Bible refers in the same way to the Lord Jesus and His work, by example:

- John 4:10 about living water
- Hebrews 4:12 about the living Word
- Hebrews 10:20 about the living Way
- Romans 12:1 about a living Sacrifice
- 1 Peter 1:3 about the living Hope and in
- 1 Peter 2:4,5 it is said that we are living stones.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Giver of life and everything connected to life.

- In this framework we also have a place: we are the loving stones of the house of God.
- We are living members of His church. Therefore we must offer ourselves up and worship the Lord Jesus in the true faith. In His words: we must go to Him.

But this is difficult work, and who wants to do such difficult work?

- Immediately a quarrel started amongst the Jews.
- They wanted to know how Jesus had the right of stating that He is the bread that descended from heaven. (Verse 41)
- They also refused to accept what He said namely that those who eat His flesh and drink His blood have eternal life and that those people doing so will be resurrected on the final day.

Because of this the people abandoned Jesus.

Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. (John 6:67)

Here he thus confesses that he believes that the Lord will resurrect him on the final day together with the other believers, because he confesses that he is striving for the eternal life the Lord is speaking about. Just consider the future the Lord is putting here.

Let us listen to the same matter, but as the Holy Spirit puts it much later through the pen of Paul in 1Thessalonians 4:13-18:

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

(1Thessalonians 4:13-18)

This is how the double-edged sword of the Lord works:

- It attracts some people and drives others away.
- Those who eat the Bread of the life are called up to meet the Lord in the clouds and to be with the Lord forever.

The other people are of course also called up.

- It is not written in the passage we have read but is written in other places.
- As the Lord calls us up just the same He also calls them up and then they are also reunited by body and soul, and then they enter into the judgement.

How wide is our vision of life? Do we see the Second Coming and our resurrection through the grace of God also in our daily lives? Now question yourself: Do I know the Bread that gives life?

At the same time it points out the difference between true and false faith.

Let us put it slightly differently, but still true: It shows the difference between the people having the eternal life and those who do not want to believe in God.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 149:1

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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 1 December 2013
 Scripture Modern King James Version