

**REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 28 OCTOBER 2012
MORNING SERVICE**

Sing before: Psalm 38:1,2

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 36:2

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 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 46:6

Scripture reading: John 7:30-52

Scripture text: John 7:38, 39

38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

(John 7: 38-39)

(He who has faith in me, out of his body, as the Writings have said, will come rivers of living water. This he said of the Spirit which would be given to those who had faith in him: the Spirit had not been given then, because the glory of Jesus was still to come.) (Bible in Basic English)

The renewing working of the Holy Spirit is like a stream of water. In their unbelief the Jewish leaders remain standing aside thirsty.

In this sermon we consider the following:

- 1. The authorities' hatred.**
- 2. The division amongst the people of the church.**

1. The authorities' hatred

From the beginning of creation preaching that reveals the truth about the Lord has always caused turbulence and division among people. This was so when Jesus preached:

- It caused turbulence and division among the Jews in Jerusalem.
- The result was that the Jews tried unsuccessfully to arrest Him.

John tells us here not only that the Sanhedrin tried to arrest Jesus but also of the different attitudes towards Jesus demonstrated in the faith of the various groups of people in the community.

- The first opinion we find is that of the Sanhedrin which wants to arrest Jesus (John 5:16).
- John tells us why this plan could not succeed:
- He tells us where the obstacle to it came from – it was not because of human intervention.

It was the result of God's Counsel according to which all events and times are determined (see Acts 2:23).

Note the contrast – the guards are sent to seize Jesus but no one laid a hand on Him because God's Counsel prevented it:

They sought therefore to take him: and no man laid his hand on him, because his hour was not yet come. (John 7:30)

In verse 31 we are told of the second opinion concerning Jesus.

- A large part of the people thought that He could be the Messiah.
- They all knew of the miraculous signs done by Jesus.

It is written in John 2:23. John does not say that they believed Jesus to be the Messiah. They did believe that a Messiah would come, and they speculated as to whether Jesus could perhaps be this Messiah:

But of the multitude many believed on him; and they said, When the Christ shall come, will he do more signs than those which this man hath done? (John 7:31)

John writes all this to show that the authorities were averse to Jesus while the people were mainly sympathetic to Him – although their sympathy was not all founded in true faith.

Jesus' popularity reached the ears of the Sanhedrin.

- The Sanhedrin consisted of the highest aristocracy in Jerusalem.
 - It was a council consisting of the High Priest and all previous High Priests as well as members of the High priestly families.
 - They sent the temple guards to arrest Jesus.

When the temple guards arrived, Jesus said "**I am with you for only a short time.**"-

- With this Jesus announced the end of His life on earth which would come shortly.
- His death would however be very different from that of ordinary people. His death would be a triumph over the Jews.

The temple guards sent by the Sanhedrin to capture Him and paralyze His ministry would after His death not be able to do so;

- Then the restrictions the Jews are trying to put onto His ministry will be totally removed.
- Then His task will be completed and will He return to His Sender.
- He will then be beyond the reach of the people seeking to paralyze His ministry or to seize Him and to kill Him.

The Lord reveals that He will be on earth only a short while and then He will be elsewhere.

- This could be a hint of the empty grave the people will find after his resurrection.
- It could also be a reference to the Ascension and that in their unbelief these people cannot go where Jesus will then be, that is in Heaven (the Kingdom of God the Father).
- A further meaning is that where Jesus will be He cannot be reached by any enmity – as the Sanhedrin expresses on earth.
 - In the background there is the fact that all these people will go to Hell.

The Jews referred to here were all representatives of the Sanhedrin.

- Spiritually they were deaf to Jesus' words. They understood so little of what Jesus said that they thought He would physically leave their area out of fear for their threats.
- On the one hand there lies a deep contempt for Jesus in their words and on the other an arrogant confidence. All Jesus' attempts to escape them will be of no avail.

2. The division among the people of the church

After John has told us of Sanhedrin's hate and enmity he tells us of Jesus' actions and how the crowd reacted.

- On the last day of the feast (the seventh day) the division among the people showed sharply.

During the feast the procession of priests had on the preceding six days once each day walked around the altar for burnt offerings with willow branches in their hands.

- On each of the seven days a priest fetched water out of the fountain at Siloam in a golden jar.
- He then poured this water into two silver jars, which stood at the western side of the altar. The people then recited the following words of Isaiah 12:3:

Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

On the seventh day the Jews and the priests sang Psalm 100 as an antiphony until everybody gathered around the altar.

- Then the priests walked seven times around the altar with willow branches in their hands.
- When they stood in seven rows around the altar, the priest with the golden jar approached and poured the water into the two silver jars whilst the Jews again said:
Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

The reason why the Jews recited these words was that they believed that the Messiah would give them bliss and salvation as Moses had made water flow from the rock.

At this moment Jesus got up and said:

"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

- Thereby the Lord Jesus announced Himself at that precise moment as the Messiah.
- The words **“come”** and **“drink”** were merely a call to true faith.

John connects this statement of Jesus with the Holy Spirit who was later given to the church.

- After the giving of the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit is like a fountain which is always alive because the Lord lives in His church.
- Because the Holy Spirit was given only later John says that the Holy Spirit was not there, meaning that He had not yet been given to the church.

How do people react to Jesus' preaching? The following verses describe the different reactions.

Note that the sacrificial ceremony is not described further – only the division and turbulence among the people: Great division occurred.

- Some thought that Jesus could be a prophet.
- A small group believed Him to be the Messiah Himself.

You will note that the Bible tells that the people thought so.

- That is because they believed that a prophet would precede the Messiah.
- A reference to this is in John 1:21. "They questioned John the Baptist:
And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No (John 1:21)

A further group doubted this.

- They thought that the kind of miracles worked would show who was the Messiah.
 - Accordingly they wondered whether the Messiah would do more miraculous signs than this man.
- Another group did not consider miracles or faith at all.
 - They argued that Jesus could not be the Messiah because he came from the wrong place.

A great disturbance then occurred among the people and some tried to seize Him.

- This shows that some definitely understood that Jesus had proclaimed Himself to be the Messiah.
- This entitled them to arrest Him because such a statement was an offence.

Again the Bible tells us that no one laid a hand on Him. The Counsel of the Lord kept everyone under control so that no harm could befall the Lord Jesus.

The division was not limited to the crowd.

- In the inner circle of the Sanhedrin there was even more division.
- The Bible tells us that meanwhile the temple guards had returned to the Sanhedrin – without Jesus.

Immediately the Sanhedrin was angered and called for an explanation.

- Instead of seizing Jesus the guards listened to His preaching.
- They were so impressed by it that they came back without Him.
- They were honest about it – the reason why they did not arrest Jesus was that :
"No one ever spoke the way this man does".

Their testimony was not well received by the Sanhedrin because in it they indicated that they held the preaching of Jesus in higher esteem than that of the official priests of Israel, being the Sanhedrin!

The Bible tells us that the anger of the Pharisees, the self-appointed guardians of the faith in Israel, knew no bounds.

- They were convinced that their own servants were deceived into believing otherwise than the leaders. They vented their frustration on the guards and the people.
- In their shortsightedness they cursed the people because some of them considered Jesus to be the Messiah.

The division went further because Nicodemus a member of the Sanhedrin, points out to them that they were ignoring a basic rule of their law by judging a person without first hearing him.

- Immediately he is scornfully asked whether he too is from Galilee that despised place.
- So people fall in error when they act out of hate and ignorance. Galilee was despised as a district of heathens.

They were wrong when they said to Nicodemus that no prophet comes from Galilee.

- They ignored that both Jonah and Nahum came from Galilee.
- Jesus grew up in Nazareth in Galilee, but He was born in Bethlehem.

The Scripture says that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem – it does not say where He would grow up.

The Pharisees thus distorted the Bible in order to make it serve their false preaching.

It would be easy to read this history and forget it.

- But you should not do so.
- Look at the principles shown in it and see how it affects you today.

Remember all that happened that day and all that was said concerned the church and its members as at that time.

These things do not deal with the heathens – it deals with the believers. Come put yourself in the position of the people of that day:

- Do you truly accept the Lord Jesus as your Redeemer?

There are many true believers that worship the Lord Jesus with heart and soul.

- But there are many among us who do as the greater part of that crowd – they wonder whether He really is the Messiah.
- Many people do not believe at all.
- Many think that He was a special person, but that He is not God.

Is this not the reason why the worship of many of us lacks the depth it should have?

The public worship of that day ended in chaos and everybody went home.

- Some of us today also say that the church service does not touch them.
- They attend church and go home and nothing has happened to them.

Let us look at those people on that day.

- They failed to understand the meaning of that day and failed to see the God of that day.
- Do you now understand why the Lord Jesus told those church people that they would not find Him once He has left them?
- They will all be in hell whereas He will be in Heaven.

On that day all misunderstood the Lord Jesus because all of them approached the Bible with human prejudices.

- Each of them looked in the Bible for that which he as man liked instead of listening unreservedly to what the Bible tells and then to unreservedly accept and bow for it.
- That is why they fell into the distorted untruthful argument about where the Lord came from and wanted to arrest Him.

When one looks at what is happening presently in the Reformed Churches one can ask the question how far we differ from the Sanhedrin?

- Do we still have the capacity to take a stand on a principle of faith and to defend it because it is the truth
- or do we put our own point of view or our own tradition or are we just being difficult?

The Bible teaches us here that the Lord calls the thirsty to the water of life.

- He is calling you.
- He calls all that are led by God the Holy Spirit.
- When those occurrences took place that day about the Lord Jesus the Holy Spirit had not yet been given. Now He has been given to the church and all true believers.
- We now live in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Do we know Him and does He rule our lives?

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 71:1, 9

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
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