

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2013 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 4:2

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 18:11

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 99:4,5

Law

Psalm: 99:4,5

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 86:6

Scripture reading: Revelation 3

Scripture text: Revelation 3: 15, 16

15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

16 "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

(Revelation 3:15, 16)

Brothers and sisters where does our Faith-practice fit into this letter? If we are not reckless towards our worship, but also not really dedicated, then this letter is addressed to us!

We give attention to the following matters:

1. **The congregation of Laodicea**
2. **The results of their lifestyle**
3. **Warning: guard against worship of habit**

1. **The congregation of Laodicea**

Come, let us meet Laodicea our fellow Christian congregation in Small-Asia.

- Our first meeting with the congregation, through this letter of our Lord, is a bleak one.
- Our Lord has no word of praise or approval towards these brothers and sisters.

Still it is a congregation where matters are running smoothly.

- We do not read about any oppression taking place there.
- We also do not know about any battle they were involved into – there were no heretics confusing the congregation.
- Furthermore there was peace in the congregation because they were able to go where they wanted.

The spiritual condition of the brothers and sisters there were very poor.

- This was especially so because they had no idea about their own condition – they did not realize what they were doing and at what notch their faith-life was.
- This sorrowful condition developed because the congregation did not stand careless about matters of faith but they also were not dedicated.
- Possibly the most important – they did not realize what it meant to be humble.

Then the Triune God confronted them with their situation.

- He is not interested in your interpretation of your situation – He is only interested in the truth.
- He heard that the congregation of Laodicea verbally confessed that they loved the Lord and are dependent upon Him.
- But He also knew it not to be the truth. Due to their self-complacency there was a measure of lack of emotion with the congregation.

The congregation were braggarts because they went around proclaiming themselves to be rich and lacking nothing.

- But in fact it was this wealth that led to their spiritual decay – especially because it nullified their humbleness.
- They developed in an independent spirit leading them further astray from the Lord.
- Without them realizing it their earthly wealth choked their spiritual life.

What did they miss?

- Humbleness is the vital foundation of the Christian redemption because we can only share in the redemption if we continually sharply realize that we have nothing to use in continuing our battle against the devil.
- We must thus every moment live with our eyes focussed upon God with the faith and expectation that He would serve us the grace to handle Satan and withstand his assaults.

The lifestyle of the Laodicean was one of denying a helping hand to anybody else.

- Therefore their faith-planning was tailored so that they could depend upon their own strength.
- In essence this makes contact between such a member and the Lord Jesus Christ impossible.

2. The results of their lifestyle

When man rejects God the Lord withdraws His grace to that person and then that person starts wandering away from God – even whilst he still remains under the impression of worshipping the Lord.

- Exactly that happened to the congregation of Laodicea. They started living a type life where they planned and controlled everything and sorted everything into little boxes and containers: so much for me here, and this is for my business, and so much for the Lord.
- This is how it happened that the congregation of Laodicea became lukewarm.
 - They did not put their entire life aside for God.
 - They gave a portion to God and measured the rest out to the world.

What does the Lord think about this? The Lord abhors such a state of affairs.

- Therefore it is clear from the letter that the Lord loathes the congregation: **I will vomit you out of My mouth.**
- Do you not also find it strange that the Lord states that a cold person is more acceptable to Him than a lukewarm person?
 - We would think that such a person at least still tries!
 - The Lord thinks differently.

Here the Lord declares clearly that He prefers somebody cold to somebody lukewarm, because somebody who is cold because he is in total disregard could still possibly come to conversion.

- A cold person could change so that he eventually would be warm in his life towards the Lord.
- Thus there is hope for a man of the world who have never before been serious about the gospel.
- But there is no hope for a watered-down Christian not wanting to be convinced that he must improve!

You must keep in mind what the previous letters taught, namely that the life of a congregation exists out of the compiled lives of its members.

- Could it not possibly be that the Lord, in His judgement, wants to put our congregation in certain aspects next to the congregation of Laodicea?
- Still God is not without mercy – although He has reason to be!

He comes and tells the proud Laodiceans:

Get eye salve from Me to open our eyes because the salve you use keeps you blind.

- Ordinary doctor's ointment – such as made by the people of Laodicea – works only for the physical eyes.
- The ointment of God opens your eyes to see your own misery and together therewith the grace of His salvation in Jesus Christ.

Further the Lord also mentions the gold for the true wealth – the eternal life and white clothing.

- White here has the meaning of standing in contrast against black, which is the color of death.
- But it also stands against the black goat-hair clothing, which was the typical attire of the rich in Laodicea.
- Further with is of course the color of God's holiness. Look again at the danger-point of this sermon:

The congregation members of Laodicea did not energetically oppose God, they were just neutral. This is already bad enough but the main problem of that congregation was their inability of noticing their condition.

3. Warning: guard against worship of habit

The believers in Laodicea grew used to their worshipping.

- They lost the freshness and newness of worshipping God.
- They just believed as such and the children also just heard it as such during catechization and then went ahead and confessed their faith and then just carried on.

This is why the Lord spat them out.

- Are there not some of those matters true about me and every one of us in this congregation?
- We must reflect about this because we are again going to celebrate Holy Communion. With what realization of this important matter do we come to the Lord?

Let us save ourselves a lot of misery and seriously reflect upon the condition of our faith-life.

- We are at the moment busy preparing and it is thus fitting that we pay attention to it.
- It concerns the disposition of all of us.

You can react in two ways to the demand of the Lord.

- Firstly we can, to the call of the Lord towards improvement, immediately kneel down, show remorse and beg for forgiveness – which, should we truly ask for it, will immediately be granted to us.
- Or we can, like Cain, rebel against God.

You must not think that Cain became a non-believer!

- Indeed he accompanied his brother in offering. But his offer was unjust because he was lukewarm or cold in his worship.
- God went to speak to him and he only hung down his head.
- We must just realize that we have to continually work on our faith should we want to keep it fresh and well.

The Christ-gospel consists out of two parts:

- In Revelation the Lord writes that He is at the door knocking.
 - He thus appeals to our worship and faith to be warm.
 - The intention therewith is definitely not that we have a choice of opening or closing.
 - Therewith the Lord simply puts the fact: He should be inside joining in the festivity because that is what He died for.
 - A person who is lukewarm in his faith is somebody who is careless and saddens the Lord. To the likes of those the Lord preaches that they must come to conversion.
- The second part of the Christ-preaching is that He promises that He will cover all people, who with full responsibility enjoy His grace over us, with kings-glory.
- Do you realize what great words these are? We are going to celebrate Holy Communion. We are thus going to sit at the table of Holy Communion with the claim in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ that He commanded us to come and share in the glory of the table.
- He calls us thereto to remind us of His work and to thereby egg us on to be alive in faith and to be sacrificial.

Brothers and sisters let us fight our slackness of faith in every terrain. Come, let us see to it that we are a congregation that is warm in our faith, our relationship with God and with each other.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 105:2

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

**Dr MJ Du Plessis
Helping Reverend
Reformed Church Clanwilliam
3 February 2013
Scripture Modern King James Version**