

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 24 JUNE 2007: MORNING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Hymn 14-2:1

*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 32:4

**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 catholic\* 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 139:12.*

Law

Psalm: 139:12

**Prayer:**

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation for 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: 4:2

Scripture: 1 Kings 22

Text: 1 Kings 22:14

**"But Micaiah said, "As surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what the Lord tells me."**

The true believer must always test the spirits around him.

- His entire life is one of testing and weighing up.
- In any given situation in which he may find himself he has to determine what is right in the eyes of the Lord.

The true believer's life is often very difficult because he can establish what is right but because of circumstances he is unable to do the right thing.

- A superhuman effort is required of the true believer to be able to remain true to the right principles.

In the chapter we have read we learn that Ahab wants to go to war against the Arameans. To do so he asks Jehoshaphat to be his ally. Between these two kings there is a big difference.

- Ahab was an unbeliever and persecutor of the prophets of the Lord.
- Jehoshaphat was a true believer who sought the will of the Lord.

On having agreed to join Ahab the difference between the two men began to show. We read in verse 5: **But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "First seek the counsel of the Lord."**

His attitude is clear. Let us first examine the situation and let us first find out what the will of God is in the matter.

- Precipitate action could anger the Lord.
- We may go into battle, but is this what the Lord wants?

The king of Israel then gathered the prophets – about 400 of them.

- He asked them whether he should go to war or not.
- They responded that he should because the Lord would give the enemy into his hand.

But who were these 400 prophets?

- They were not the prophets of Baal and Asherah because Elijah had put them to death at Mount Carmel. (1 Kings 18:40)
- It is unlikely that Ahab would have called for such prophets as it would have insulted Jehoshaphat's religion of which he was aware.
- They also could not have been true prophets of the Lord because they had all been put to death by Jezebel. (1 Kings 18:4)

Who were they then?

- Probably false prophets who went about prophesying for money.
- To them the Lord counted for as little as Baäl.
- Their prophecy was aimed at pleasing the person who paid them.

These prophets also said that they spoke in the name of the Lord but the name they used was Adonaj which is the Hebrew name of the Lord showing His might, they did not use the name of the God of the Covenant, Jahwe.

But Jehoshaphat is not satisfied with their prophecy.

- The majority is not always correct.
- He wants to hear what a prophet of the Lord says about the will of the Lord.

Are we not often satisfied with what everybody says and in so doing we duck out of our own responsibility of testing and distinguishing?

- It concerns one's personal relationship with God.
- That is why the church must be like Jehoshaphat and test every issue against this principle.

Ahab tells Jehoshaphat that he knows of such a prophet but hates him because he always prophesies something bad about him.

- But Micaiah is nevertheless brought.
- While waiting for Micaiah to arrive the 400 prophets continue prophesying.
- Zedekiah shows with horns made of iron how Ahab will gore the Arameans.

On the way the messenger advises Micaiah.

- He must agree with the other prophets.
- Clearly the truth is irrelevant, what is important is that the people will distrust the prophets when they disagree.

But Micaiah swears on oath that he will not speak what pleases the king. He will speak only what the Lord tells him to say.

When Ahab first ask Micaiah whether he should go to war or not Micaiah answers that he should go. (verse 15)

- But something must have shown that he was not telling the truth.
- Ahab is angered and orders Micaiah to tell the truth and not to deceive him.

Strange but true – it is human nature to want the truth, but also to be deceived.

- Ahab wants to know the truth but that truth must correspond to what his wishes are.
- He prefers a lie if the truth is contrary to his desires.

Micaiah then speaks. In his prophecy, he shows Ahab what the Lord has in store for him.

- The Lord showed Micaiah all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd.
- The shepherd that is gone is Ahab. The Lord will remove him because of his ungodliness.

Micaiah prophesies that he saw an assembly in heaven.

- God asked who would entice Ahab to go to war against Ramoth Gilead for the Lord wanted to put him to death there.
- A spirit came forward and said that he would do so.
- The Lord then asked the spirit by what means he would entice Ahab. The spirit answered that he would put a lying spirit in the mouths of the prophets of the king.

That brings us to the nub of this history. The question is: why does Ahab believe the lying spirit?

- Ahab is seduced by the lying spirit because he wants to do so.
- He is inherently dishonest – that is why he follows the lying spirit.
- He cannot plead innocence before the Lord because Micaiah revealed the whole truth to him.

Each one of us stands like that before God.

- We know the truth, hence we must test everything and everybody and not allow ourselves to be misled.
- Numbers and the majority should not be decisive because the lying spirit could be in the majority.

The Lord Jesus Christ in His human nature was also in this situation. Satan comes to him in the desert with temptations and tries to seduce him into worshipping him.

- It would have made life so much simpler for Jesus had he worshipped the devil because He would then not have died on the cross.
- He stood before an easier but the wrong choice.
- He had to determine what was right.
- He chose to serve God alone and Satan was sent away.

We see Him dying on the cross.

- The path is narrow and the gate is small.
- On this path of suffering we find the Lord Jesus.
- It is all for us so that we can follow Him on this path.

In the days of Jesus He was in a position similar to that of Micaiah. The lying spirit was in the church and its leaders so that Jesus died although He was innocent.

We can and must walk this road forcefully and in comfort because we have the Holy Spirit that guides us in the truth.

- Like Micaiah we can joyfully and proudly live honestly and gloriously before the Lord.
- Like him we shall when we die enter the glory of the Lord because the blood of our Lord Jesus guarantees it.
- He died for the mistakes we made and are making in our life.

In our text we see the following vision of the future:

- The power of the lying spirit increases as the Second Coming of the Lord approaches.
- The lying spirit uses the Name of the Lord Jesus to introduce himself – "Look, here is the Christ!" or "Look there He is!" (Mark 13:21-23)
- It is so much simpler if we always make sure of what the Lord wants and do only that what the Lord wants of us.

Let us always test the spirits and stay with the truth. Then we shall be worthy of the suffering and the resurrection and the recreation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer  
Closing Psalm: 119:10

The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord turn His countenance to you and give you peace.

**Amen**

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