

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE – SUNDAY 30 JANUARY 2011 – MORNING SERVICE.

Sing beforehand: Hymn 12-3:1

Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth. Beloved, grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. By the powerful operation of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Song of praise: Psalm 89:3+14

Confession of faith: Apostles Creed

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 Ghost, 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 thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead: I believe in the Holy Ghost: I believe in the holy catholic church: the communion of saints: The forgiveness of sins: The resurrection of the body: And the life everlasting. Amen.

After the law we ask God to forgive our sins with Psalm 119:13.

Law

Psalm 119:13

Prayer

- *Doxology:*
- *Worship:*
- *Confession:*
- *Supplication (for pardon of sins):*
- *Thanksgiving:*
- *Intercession (for the need of the congregation, the church, authorities, sinful world and appeal to the promises of God)*
- *General supplication:*
- *Illumination of the Holy Spirit (necessary for the ministry of the Word):*

Amen.

Psalm 36:1

Scripture reading: 1 Kings 14

Text: 1 Kings 14:6c

“...I have been sent to you with bad news.”

This passage is about conflict. One can live with God and other people only if your path is straight.

- If you are hypocritical in any way, the Lord will confront you with it.
- The Lord will not confront you diplomatically or in the fashion you present yourself.
- The Lord will touch you in the truth hidden behind the facade – where it hurts most. It is there that He destroys evil.

This means that if we want to serve the Lord truly and properly we shall in our life often find ourselves to be in conflict with other people.

- With fellow believers and with unbelievers.

- But one thing must be clear to us – The honour of God must be served.

In this sermon we shall consider the following:

- 1. What causes conflict?**
- 2. Can conflict between people be avoided?**
- 3. How must we deal with conflict?**
- 4. Follow Jesus and walk a straight path until He returns.**

1. What causes conflict?

Dishonesty towards the Lord results in conflict. Let us follow Jeroboam's history closely. We observe how he progressed and became king and where he went wrong.

He was the child of widow.

- This particularity is recorded in the Bible so that we might know that he grew up in poor circumstances (1 Kings 11:26).
- He was a diligent worker.
 - When the supporting terraces were built around Jerusalem, he was put in charge of the workers from Ephraim.
 - Solomon then put him in charge of all the workers from the house of Joseph.

Jeroboam's job required him to travel from Jerusalem.

- On one such occasion the Lord sent the prophet Ahijah, the same one of whom we have read, to Jeroboam.
- Out in the country where the two of them were alone, Ahijah tore his new cloak into twelve pieces and told Jeroboam to pick up ten pieces.
- He then prophesied that the Lord would make Jeroboam king of ten tribes of Israel (1 Kings 11:31).
- The prophet also gave him the reason: The Israelites had begun to worship idols.

The issues the prophet enumerated to Jeroboam as motivation for the Lord's conduct were in fact a reproach to Solomon because the idols listed are the same as those worshipped by Solomon during his last days (1 Kings 11:4-6).

Let us look at the meaning of this history.

- The LORD reveals to Jeroboam that He is going to punish the reigning royal house (the house of Solomon) because of their idolatry.
- That is a clear indication for him. When he is king he must serve the Lord. Otherwise the Lord will punish him too and take everything away from him as He does with Solomon (1 Kings 11:37-39).

The passage we have read tells us what happened – Jeroboam did not do what the LORD expected of him.

- He revolted against Solomon and was compelled to flee.
- He was given refuge by Shishak the king of Egypt and remained there until Solomon's death.

What occurred during those years in Egypt?

- Jeroboam became acquainted with the Egyptian religion.
- He practiced the same idolatry that resulted in the adoration of the golden calf at the time the LORD gave the Law.

We learn of Jeroboam's dishonesty.

- We read in 1 Kings 12:25-33 that he set up two official places of worship and commanded his people to worship there and not in Jerusalem.
- He made a golden calf for each shrine and declared them to be the gods who had brought them up out of Egypt.

The LORD sent a prophet from Judah to warn Jeroboam, but all in vain.

- Jeroboam went from bad to worse – he appointed all sorts of people as priests to the shrines on the high places (1 Kings 13:33–34).
- He never changed his ways. He persisted in these idolatries.

In his dishonesty Jeroboam had two faces for there are signs that he also purported to worship the LORD.

- He and his wife named one of their children Abijah which means “God (Jehova) is my father”.
- But that was not sufficient. Hence he came into conflict with the LORD.

2. Can conflict between people be avoided?

The answer is: No. All people who seek trouble with the LORD find it.

The day of conflict with the LORD arrived when the child Abijah fell ill.

- It was a serious illness and the king and his wife wished to know whether the child would die or whether he would recover. That is the history we read.
- Because of his sins Jeroboam no longer got along well with the prophet Ahijah.
- That is why he sent his wife to Ahijah - but she must disguise herself.

Have you noticed how much conflict there is between unbelievers?

- Jeroboam knows very well that Ahijah predicts the truth.
- He reminds his wife thereof that Ahijah predicted that he would become king. He therefore sincerely believes that Ahijah shall be able to foretell what will happen to their child.

People who conduct themselves in this manner can never walk the road with the Lord. Hence the Bible interjects something here.

- The prophet was an old man at this time.
 - His sight was gone because of his age.
 - He could no longer see.
- But to the LORD sight was never important.
 - To people sight is important and they always want to see signs.
- The LORD therefore goes beyond the visible.
 - The LORD reveals to Ahijah that the queen is coming to him.
 - His eyes would deceive him as she is disguised. Human works to prevent him from knowing the identity of his visitor.
 - But then the LORD steps in with His revelation!

The LORD reveals that Ahijah does not need to be able to see – he only needs to hear when she arrives. The LORD also revealed what Ahijah is to say.

Note the importance of this narration.

- The LORD does not allow Jeroboam's wife to play her part.

- In fact, part of the confrontation is about her conduct – that she pretends to be someone else.
- The LORD sees through the falsity to the heart of the matter – your appearance cannot change the outcome of the LORD’s issue with you.

The LORD confronts us with that which we are.

- Ahijah does not ask her who she is,
- Also not the purpose of her visit.
- The LORD lets the prophet address her by the appellation she likes the least at that stage: wife of Jeroboam!

Note how the prophet deals with the matter.

- He is not rude or overbearing but he speaks directly and searchingly. The words “wife of Jeroboam” contains a measure of reproach.
- You do not serve the LORD – why are you here?
- It was well known that Jeroboam had deserted the LORD and introduced the worship of the calf.

The LORD puts the matter painfully but true.

- The LORD had shown Jeroboam great benevolence.
- In return Jeroboam had shown only ingratitude and disloyalty to the LORD.
- Hence the LORD contrasts Jeroboam’s ingratitude with the grace shown him by the LORD.

The LORD raised Jeroboam up out of his people. Perhaps one should remember here his poor descent.

- For his sake the LORD had torn away a part of the kingship of Israel from the house of David.
- The LORD had raised him from being an overseer of slaves to being the king of ten tribes of Israel. (see 1 Kings 11:30-31)

Jeroboam’s end was no better than that of David (cf 1Kings 11:38 and 1Kings 14:8).

In fact, it was worse because David did better than Jeroboam in one respect:

- No matter how often he sinned, he kept his life in line with what the LORD desired of him.
- In deep remorse he always went to the LORD to make amends. This Jeroboam never did.

3. How must we deal with conflict?

In all situations of conflict one must be honest and truthful.

- The LORD confronts Jeroboam plainly. He was worse than anyone before him.
- With these words the LORD means that not one of the kings Saul, David and Solomon was as bad as he.
- Perhaps we should also consider the judges, for example, the ephod of gold made by Gideon and which was worshipped by the people at Ophrah. (Judges 8:27; 1Samuel 22:17; 1Kings 11:5-8)

The point at issue here is that nobody having a false vision of God will escape His judgment.

- Therefore the LORD speaks plainly about Jeroboam’s past.
- The LORD is equally plain about his future.

Practically it means that in a situation of conflict you must be able to point out the consequences of somebody’s wrongful conduct.

- Note how Ahijah does it with Jeroboam: Because, having received so much grace from the LORD, Jeroboam did not live to the greater glory of the LORD, the LORD took everything away from him.

It is put plainly and directly to him that no male of his house shall ever be buried.

- The dogs and the birds will eat them.
- Only one is excepted – little Abijah. Because he was the only one in whom the LORD found anything good, he will be buried.
 - He would not recover from his illness
 - The moment Jeroboam's wife sets foot in her city the boy will die.

We must remember that confrontation need not always be negative as it was between Ahijah and the wife of Jeroboam (which at heart was a confrontation between the Lord and Jeroboam).

- There are also occasions where believers come into conflict when one of them is unwilling to perform his duty.
- One example is the occasion when Elijah sent Obadiah to tell Ahab that he wished to meet him when the LORD wanted to send rain again (1Kings 18:1-15)
- Obadiah was afraid to go and Elijah had to admonish him to go to Ahab.
 - This was not an angry confrontation
 - It was merely a case of two believers admonishing one another to do what the LORD wished to have done.

One could say that the conflict between Ahijah and Jeroboam's wife was temperate and controlled because we cannot say from the Bible that they were angry and unfriendly towards one another.

- But this does not mean that believers will never find themselves in situations of aggression.
- When Elijah met with Ahab after Obadiah had announced him, Ahab abused him as being a "troubler of Israel".(1Kings 18:16)
- In those days it was a serious matter to be called a troublemaker.

The Lord Jesus on two occasions took a whip to chase people from the temple.

- Nobody did anything to Him because they knew that He acted with authority.
- The Bible tells us that the whole crowd was amazed at His teaching (Mark 11:18).

The principle is clear. In all confrontations you must be sure that you serve the interests and the honour of the Lord.

4. Follow the Lord Jesus and walk a straight path until He returns.

Our entire salvation was decided in Jesus' confrontation with death and simultaneously with the devil and his powers.

- With His death and resurrection Jesus revealed His divine power and His divine authority.
- It was an authority with which He freed us from all fear and threats.
- We need not fear anybody because there is nothing and nobody who can do anything to us without the will of God.

But, on the other hand, this burdened us with a heavy responsibility.

- We may not go through life vacillating.
- We must be willing to state the case of the Lord in all circumstances.

We must therefore have clarity about the persons against whom our confrontation must be directed and what the issues are.

- We must put the Lord's case against anyone who threatens the honour of the Lord, His church or any believer.
- This may be your neighbour. Possibly a colleague. It could be the government of the day.

The matter is fairly simple: You can live in death or be alive in death.

- Jeroboam and his wife lived in death. They were lost.
- Ahijah was in death still alive, because, all who serve the Lord faithfully are alive in His kingdom while dead.
- We must now already demonstrate the principles of the eternal life in our intercourse with other people.

Let us apply this to ourselves.

- We so easily do something in order to be popular – something wrong or support a wrong point of view.
- We also simply join the main stream in something that appears to be acceptable to the community – sometimes in matters that are not acceptable to the Lord or serving His honour and also not to the advantage of the church!
- In this situation we see something of what the Lord said to Jeroboam:
...You have made for yourself other gods, idols made of metal; you have provoked Me to anger and thrust Me behind your back. (1Kings 14:9)

We shall only be able to send children of the covenant into the future if we raise them with the covenant of the LORD.

- Here our honesty and witness is demanded of us.
 - We shall have to teach them clearly and explicitly what is acceptable to the Lord and what is wrong.
 - And we must teach our children to take a stand against matters and ideas that are wrong.
 - They must see the example set by us as parents so that they can follow it!
- We can live with other people and with God if we walk a straight path.
 - If we are hypocritical in any way or allow the Lord to be pushed out of our life or education, the Lord will confront us about that.
 - That is not all. Being vacillating or a “yes-man” who only follows the crowd is the quickest way of losing the respect of people.

The LORD does not approach us diplomatically – softly and circumlocutory – without touching on the issue.

- In any event not under the flag of worldliness, for that is pure paganism.
- Also not on the appearance many of us put up, namely, that we are modern people and that times have changed. Jeroboam was riding this wagon that provided a modern alternative for the people of his day.

The Lord will confront us and the world on that which lies behind the façade: in the deepest chambers where God is phased out of His property and His creation.

- He shall destroy evil because the faith of many people has become so poor that they are no longer able to distinguish.
- And because the average person's knowledge of the Bible has become so poor that religion is only religion to them. It does not matter who is God and who is not.

This morning the Lord sends you out by the doors of this church to bear witness for Him this week.

- We are sent by the Lord to stand up to the unbelievers - to put the truth up against the lie.
- We shall be able to do this only if we do not serve other gods as Jeroboam did. And if we do not, like Ahab, reject the Lord completely.

Our brief is clear.

- God sends bad news. Deliver it.
- Ahijah had to do it. And he did.

Go and tell the truth: that means not telling only of the Lord's judgment.

- ***Go and speak particularly of the salvation to be had when we repent.***
- Go and tell of the deep insights that we receive when the Holy Spirit begins to lead us and of the worlds and times that open up before us, visions that no unbeliever can see.
- Go and testify about prospects that go beyond this life and are so clear that that we can now already see the new heaven and the new earth where they, who believe here on earth, shall live eternally.

Amen

Closing prayer

Closing song: Psalm 30:1

The LORD bless you and keep you;

The LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;

The LORD turn his face towards you and give you peace.

Amen.

Dr. M.J. du Plessis
Reformed Church Bellville
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