

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 24 OCTOBER 2010: MORNING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 23:3.

*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**

Song of praise: Psalm 33:1+7

**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 sins and pray for forgiveness of our sins, for a new life and reconciliation with the Lord with Psalm 48:4*

Law

Psalm: 48:4

**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 24:4

**Scripture reading:** 1 Samuel 8.

**Text:** 1 Samuel 8:7

**“And the LORD told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected Me as their king...”**

How often does it not happen! That we reject God's rule over us and turn to something else!

The people of Israel stand before Samuel.

- They request him to give them a king to lead them so that they might be like all the other nations.
- They motivate their request.

Their request is not without reason.

- Samuel reigned well over them but he grew old and he is no longer able to do so.
- We read that he appointed his two sons, Joel and Abijah, as judges in Beersheba.

It was his intention that they should assist him in ruling the people.

- But in the next verse we read that these two sons did not walk in his ways.
- They were dishonest
- They accepted bribes and perverted justice.

At first glance their case appears well founded.

- The people want a king.
- Samuel is old and it is time that an able young man takes over the reign.
- The matter appears to be presented transparently and in good faith.
  - There is no rebellion or revolution
  - The request is made in the proper way.

The elders, being the representatives of the people, held a proper meeting and at that meeting the request was put to Samuel.

- They tell Samuel plainly that they wish to be governed.
- They convey to him that they seek someone who will rule properly and not people who are dishonest and unjust.
- Samuel understands the request and the discussions at the meeting
  - The matter is made known to him
  - He is the one requested to appoint the ruler.

In verse 20 Samuel is told that the people want a king to lead them in battle.

- That is a good ground.
- Remember how the Philistines beat the Israelites and even captured the ark of God!

But behind all this that appears to be in order, lies something that is wrong!

- It is not the office of judgeship that has failed.
- The LORD only appointed judges when the people of Israel had failed.

That is where the fault lies –

- By this time, with all their experiences behind them, the people ought to have known that a king is not the answer to their problems.
- The solution is a true and personal life with the LORD.
  - A life in which they must unreservedly bow before the will of the LORD.
  - A life in which they acknowledge God's sovereignty only.

That, the people should have learnt by this time, for Samuel had saved them by powerfully moving them to repentance.

- Their turning back to God was so successful that this victory remained right through Samuel's lifetime.
- As proof they set up a stone at Ebenezer and said: "Thus far has the LORD helped us". (1 Samuel 7:12)

The situation changes now – the people now want a king.

- The relationship with the LORD is broken.
- They now wish to walk a very impersonal path with the LORD.

They now seek their salvation in an impersonal governmental structure.

- It means that they believe that they will be saved by the fact that they have a king.
- The ability of the ruler has not even been put to the test because that is not what it is about.
- All they want is to have a king over Israel as is the case with all the other nations.

Israel makes two mistakes and both against God's majesty:

- The first is that they no longer seek a personal relationship with the LORD their God.
- The second is that they do not request this imposition of the kingship as a responsible institution out of the Hand of God.

*We may put this matter plainly: it is the forsaking of God.*

It is the same as it was with the builders of the tower of Babel who sought their salvation in the tower they were building themselves.

- They too believed that in building such a mighty organisation of unity they would be able to escape from the will of God.

*Right through the Bible the Lord asks that He alone be trusted.*

- That is why the LORD considers this request by the Israelites to be idolatry.
- The LORD tells us here plainly that there is only one thing that is to our salvation in this life:
  - That is a personal relationship with Him.
  - A relationship in which we absolutely trust in Him.

In His Word God teaches us that, placing our trust in any thing or any system, other than His absolute rule, is idolatry.

It is written in the Ten Commandments:

**I am the LORD your God...**

- Immediately thereafter follows: **You shall have no other gods before Me.**
- This means that we must trust in the LORD, and in Him only, in all matters.
- The moment we turn our trust away from God, that moment we become idolators.

That is what Israel is doing here with its request for a king like all the other nations.

- Just as Israel we, too, must look to God alone for our salvation.
- This means that, in the days of our life and in the life hereafter, we seek our material and spiritual salvation from God.
- For Israel this meant that they must look to God for their government and that they would be led in their personal relationship of worship of God.

They prefer a government without God.

- In truth that is a rejection of the first Commandment.
- That is why the LORD returns to the time when the Ten Commandments were given. He says: **“...it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods ...”** (1 Sam 8:7-8)

This incorrect disposition of the people proves that this was not the only time they erred but that the entire attitude of the people was false.

- This disloyal disposition we find not only with Israel but in all people.
- So we find that, after their meeting with the serpent, Adam and Eve place their trust in the fruit and no longer in God.
- They, too, removed the personal from their worship.

The day that Israel went to Samuel with the request for a king, they were not without a king.

- The King who had chosen them as His people, still was their king – the LORD.
- The fact that the people rejected God’s kingship in exchange for the kingship of a mortal man, means also that they rejected their position as the chosen people of God.
- With this the LORD tells us that man’s salvation is not to be found in a change of structures. That is idolatry.

In this respect we sin much.

- Do we not often see a future for our country in the change of the existing structures?
  - We say that we must build religious and political structures in order to build a future for the country. That repeats the sin of Israel.
- God makes it clear that He governs and that we must place our trust in Him.
  - If we wish to change church and political structures, it should not be because we seek to save ourselves thereby.
  - It must be because God demands it. Otherwise we are, like Israel, transgressors of the First Commandment.

Our salvation is not to be found in earthly matter. It is not in the trust we place in something outside heaven. It is to be found only in God.

Samuel speaks to us also when he explains the implications of an earthly king.

- He tells the Israelites that they will lose their identity – they will turn into an impersonal mass.
- They will lose the power over their children.
- Their harvests and property will be taken.
- Every one of them will lose his liberty and become a slave to the king.

Samuel makes it plain that a person and a people must not seek his salvation in the authority as an abstract organisation of state.

We must be careful and think before we speak.

- How often do we not hear in these troubled times that people speak as if the government has replaced God?
- You know the Bible and you know that the idealistic expectations the Israelites held of their king were soon proved wrong.

- Remember the tragic history of Saul, the first king.

We make this mistake in the church as well.

- Many of us live as if our salvation depends on the structure of the church.
- One is not saved by belonging to a church.

There must be a personal bond between you and the King of the church.

- Our Lord Jesus Christ came to fulfil the kingship.
- He is now the absolute King of the church and of the world.

All of us must be true to Him in our life.

- He is the Ruler of history
- He is the only King who is able to grant us everlasting salvation – not only in eternity hereafter but also now, in time, and in the country we live in!

*This King demands of us personal service of the heart. He expects of us responsible citizenship.*

- We must, therefore, guard against belonging to the church but placing our trust outside the church.
- We must practise our citizenship of the church in such a way that the Triune God is the King. So that it is clear that He grants salvation.

Do not be misguided by the nations. Like the nations, Israel rejected God. Remember that in the Bible the word “*nations*” denotes *heathens*.

Trust in the Lord with faith, and constant worship so that in His love you share in our salvation.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing song: Psalm 84:1+2.

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 MJ Du Plessis

Reformed Church Bellville

24 October 2010

Scripture: New International Version.