

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 18 OCTOBER 2009: MORNING SERVICE

Opening reading:

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. And say, "Save us, O God of our salvation; Gather us together, and deliver us from the Gentiles, To give thanks to Your holy name, To triumph in Your praise." (1 Chronicles 16:34-35)

Sing before: Psalm 31: 1,2,3.

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

Psalm of praise: Psalm 100: 1 - 4

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 catholic* 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 27:4

Law

Psalm: 27:4

Prayer:

Almighty God, today You granted us Your goodness by sparing us. But we, from our side, often give rise to your wrath. Please grant that Your punishments may be to the salvation in our lives, so that through it, we may come to conversion.

Please grant, o Lord, that your mercy would come to our salvation so that our lives may be of true repent, through which we stimulate each other to unite in obedience to Your Word. Lord stay, like a hen with her chickens, with us. Please do not forsake us and do not withdraw your hands from us.

We thank you Father for allowing this wonderful day to dawn upon us wherein You want to again strengthen our faith when soon we will again be celebrating the death of Your Son.

We pray for Your mercy over the whole world so that those resisting You may come to conversion. But not only do we pray for the coming of Your Kingdom so that we may be taken to Christ our Master but also that the wickedness against You, Almighty, may be punished. We long for life everlasting preserved for us, by You, Lord. Therefore please grant us time till fluffiness so that our Lord Jesus Christ may come in the clouds and sin be removed from us.

In particular please grant your mercy to our congregation so that we may be strengthened in our daily battle against all evil, not only that we do battle, but that we may attain victory as well. You are able to form each one of us into a jubilant witness to the omnipotence of our God.

Please bless us with Your presence at our service. In the name of Christ we ask this.

Amen.

Psalm 98:1

Scripture reading: Daniel 5:1 – 28 and Matthew 27:45 51

Scripture text: Daniel 5:25 and Matthew 27:46

And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN (Daniel 5:25)

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46)

Two Aramaic sentences in our Bible! One preaches judgement and the other salvation.

In Babel king Nebuchadnezzar died.

- After him Belshazzar became king.
- Together with this Daniel fell into disfavour and had to live as a recluse in Babylon.

For the time that Daniel lived in the palace the Word of the Lord was there, but Belshazzar was not a religious king like his predecessor.

- As he also lived during the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar knew of better.
- But he wanted to challenge God. Therefore he had a banquet where he used the golden objects from God's temple.

You must know that the feasts of those times were all religious feasts

- By using the Lord's temple utensils for this feast he wanted to show God that he let Him (God) bow to his idols.

This king of Babel was really reckless.

- Whilst this feast was in progress the armies of the Medes and Persians were laying siege to Babel.
- As if this was not enough, Belshazzar had his thousand commanders – who should have been at the battleground together with the soldiers – with him at the feast hall.

Then God answered.

- When the excitement of this crazy feast was well on the way a Hand appeared against the wall.

- One by one strange words were written.
- Everything changed – suddenly this crazy feast was transformed into a group of scared people.

We read that the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other.

- Immediately the king fled to his idols.
- He commanded that the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers must be brought in.
- He was so anxious to know the meaning of the writing that he promised that whoever read this writing, and told its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

All in vain. Nobody was able to do it.

Then the queen, who at this stage was Belshazzar's mother, remembered about a man called Daniel who used to interpret out the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar.

In answering the king Daniel first gave him a lecture in history.

- He told him that his father also despised the Lord and that God made his heart like the beasts until he admitted that God had power of him and his kingdom.
- It is as if Daniel wanted to reproach him that he should have known better than to be so reckless.

Daniel told about the glory of the Lord, His power and the wonderful deeds performed by Him so that the next generations could know to put their trust in the Lord.

Then Daniel explained the writing. This is the inscription that was written: **Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin.**

This is the interpretation of each word:

- **Mene:** God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it.
- **Tekel:** You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting.
- **Upharsin:** This word is two words joined together.
- The first word is “**u**” meaning “and” and
- The second is “**pharsin**” meaning “has been broken in two “.

One kingdom of Belshazzar was divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

- God counted. He closed the account of Belshazzar. Full and final.
- Thereafter he was weighed in the balances. God forgot nothing nor skipped anything. Not only did He count the time but also weighed the king and his deeds. God weighs.

The Lord asks about the **contents** of your life. Then the answer came:

- You were found too light. (Wanting)
- Your life has no contents.
- For the kingdom of God you lived an empty life.

This is what Belshazzar forgot. During his life he did not honour God.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, each life devoid of God is an empty life. No matter how beautiful your life may be from the outside.

It is terrifying knowing that we were weighed... and found to be wanting.

But God has considered us in our weaknesses.

- God knew us as we are.
- Therefore, one day, four words were heard.

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

God sent Somebody to give meaning to our lives.

- On the cross God forsook Jesus Christ so that He had to face death on His own.
- He had to conquer death for all of us.

God also weighed the Lord Jesus Christ. God did not forsake Jesus Christ because He was weighed and found to be wanting.

- No, in fact, the truth is the opposite.
- He was found to be perfect.

He committed no sins and lived to perfection, but was declared wanting!

- He had to die in order to give weight to our lives!
- God forsook Him so that a new content could be given to our lives.
- God forsook Him so that God will never forsake us.

Therefore this great and important difference between Jesus Christ and us exists: God did not forsake Him because He was found to be wanting.

- On the cross God forsook Jesus Christ so that He alone had to face death.
- And so that He alone must conquer death.

The content is thus the combination of these two sentences.

- Firstly that I know and realise that the Lord weighed me and found me to be wanting.
- My sins and disobedience is not to the glory of God and therefore I am torn like Belshazzar.
- The death sentence and hellish worries and abandonment clearly face all of us.

But in contrast therewith stands the work of Jesus Christ.

- Because of my sins God forsook Him.
- He carried the immense wrath of God.
- In other words he has already carried the punishment and hellish suffering due to me because of my unjustness.

When He called: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" then the answer to this call is:

- *So that My chosen may be saved.*
- So that the punishment due to them has been complied with
- Now they have access to eternal life.

On a determined day the Lord Jesus Christ of Golgotha will come again.

- Then He will judge all that had already died as well as those still living.

- When He comes to you and me, we will also be counted and weighed, and we will be found to be good.
- Then through the virtues and effects of Christ's redemptive sacrifice we will not be wanting.

The conclusion of our judgement will be completely different to what it was for Belshazzar.

- That night – after the Lord judged him – his city fell to his enemies.
- At the conclusion of our judgement we will receive a new city from God: the New Jerusalem.

Because we are the fruit of His Son's death, we are precious to the Lord.

Beloved, when sin threatens us, keep this message of mercy in mind.

We are sinful and too light facing, in our own power, God.

But to our fortune and gain, so that He could justify our redemption, He forsook His Son on the cross.

Should this be your belief, then your life has contents. And we believe it.

Therefore we are preparing to commemorate the death of the Lord Jesus Christ again.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 130:2, 3

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

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