

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 1 MARCH 2009: MORNING SERVICE

HOLY COMMUNION

Sing before: Psalm 147:5

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 145:5 11.

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 22:2

Law

Psalm: 22:2

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 138:4

Scripture reading: Ephesians 2

Scripture text: Ephesians 2:8,9

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8,9)

In Psalm 32:1 we sing about this truth:

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit".

Two descriptions are in fact given in the passage we have read.

- On the one hand the glory and greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ is described.
 - It is told that due to the fact that God has an abundance of mercy, He, through Jesus Christ, grants us mercy.
- On the other hand it is told who we really are – we who are receiving such a wealth of mercy from God.

The Lord paints a darkish picture.

- He wants us, in order to realise for ourselves that we cannot lay claim to be mentioned in any way together with God, to be aware of exactly how wretched and hopeless we are.
- Because only against this backdrop can we realise how much mercy we in fact have received.

Verse one starts off by involving all believers personally in this matter:

... And you ...

The Lord is not only referring to the Ephesians – He is also referring to us: You as well as me.

- This matter deals with us.
 - Do not pretend that this is a remote or academical matter not concerning you!
 - The Lord is addressing you! Something has happened to you!
- The eyes of your soul were blinded and you could no longer see the Lord.
 - You then died.

- You have committed so many crimes and sins that you no longer could be deemed to be a living person.

Spiritually only the silence of the grave filled our lives. All our sin is facing the Lord.

- Because we are worthless to Him, we are not people the Lord can be proud about
- Within us there is not a shred of insight to the truth.
- Verse 2 colours the darkness even stronger over us!

in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2)

Unfortunately a spiritual death is not a condition in which you are motionless! It is a state in which you move about a lot.

- It is a state in which you experience much joy.
- It is when you gladly submit to sin and rejoice because you abhor everything that is holy.

Through our sin we are dead.

- We love to do unjust deeds.
- We excel in our conceitedness and self-love.
- In our world there is nobody able to know better or to be more important than we are.
- Therefore the will of God and His Word is no longer the rule of our lives. We live our own life.

We are religious, but in such a way that mostly it is only the dregs that we are willing to offer to God.

- We think like the devil. We do as the devil does and reason and judge like him.
- Too many times we look for the pleasure in our lives where he is.
- The world devoid of God has in many matters of principle, become the way of our life.

Judge for yourself: can anybody, who with inward pleasure sins, ever lay claim to life everlasting?

This is why it is written in verse 2 that we are following the roads of the ruler of this earth.

- The ruler of this world is the devil.
- Under his guidance he has many angels misleading and tempting the believers to evil.
- When we joyfully do wrong we join forces with this spiritual army of Satan fighting with conviction against God.

Verse 3 elaborates the description of our spiritual failures:

...among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Ephesians 2:3)

- With the desires of flesh and mind we followed the devil.
- These are all the sins pertaining to bodily pleasures and intoxication of the mind.
By nature we were children of the wrath...

No discrimination between people inside the covenant and those outside of the covenant (the heathen) is made in verse 3.

- All are sensualists of what is wrong.
- This is correct because after the Fall the minds of all people were dimmed. Therefore church people as well as non-believers commit sin.

Everybody's mind sometimes malfunctions. Therefore some of us are so stubbornly set in our wrong ways.

- It is because our way of thinking and our conscious world is completely defiled.
- Therefore there is no difference between us and the non-believers should we, only with ourselves, face God – then because of His abhorrence of our sin the Lord, in His wrath, would destroy both of us.
- With the non-believers the faith and renewal brought about by the Holy Spirit of God is lacking.

Now the Bible teaches something new. Up to now the Lord raised the matter about people who, because of their sin, will be punished and broken.

BUT now verse 4 starts with the word: **but**

... But God made us alive!

He had His Son put to death on a cross.

- The Son then bore the penalty of death and terrible anguish.
- He was willing to bear all this so that God would not subject us to it.
- All His life, especially on the cross, He bore the curse of God's wrath over us.
- His trial and His death, together with all the unjustness, anguish and pain that accompanied it was aimed at granting us mercy.

The mercy entailed that He wanted God to cleanse us from all the tarnish clinging to us, so that we may be glorified and during the next live be allowed to live in the Kingdom of God.

To save us from it, He who is holy, had to endure this terrible trial and death

The mercy from God to us therefore is: life.

- Verse 1 teaches that we were brought to life when we were dead.
- Verse 5 and 6 also teaches that we were dead through our sin but were brought to life and, together with Christ, resurrected. Already we are sitting together with Christ in heaven.

This passage proves God's determination about this matter.

- Even should we still sin, together with God, He looks past this towards life everlasting when all of us will be with Him in heaven
- The Lord Jesus brings about a very close relationship between Him and us.
 - He is the Head and we are the body
 - It is clear that in this depiction it is in fact forming a unity, because a Head does not live without a body and vice versa.

This also refers to a double resurrection.

- Firstly it is the actual resurrection of our bodies with the arrival of Christ.
- But mentioned here is also spiritual resurrection.
 - It is the arousal by the Holy Spirit when we arise from the death of our sin – when we cleanse ourselves of all the things tarnishing us.
 - This entails tarnishing of both the body and spirit.
 - When the Holy Spirit teaches and leads us to a holy service to God it is a resurrection from spiritual death.

Most of the times we consider eternal life very vaguely.

- We are uncertain of what we will do there and also of what will transpire there.
- Therefore in verse 7 the veil is partially lifted:
 - That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His Kindness toward us in Jesus Christ.
 - Eternity will not be something boringly continuing.
 - It is a time of diversification and selection of mercy and experiencing glory.

Why does the Lord do all this – especially seen against the background of all my sin?

What have I done to merit this?

- The answer is revealed in our scripture text: You did nothing. Your whole heart and person faces God in utter condemnation.
- But you are saved through grace. Grace standing in direct opposition to your own achievement.
- Because God chose you, the Holy Spirit brought you to faith. And now, because this is what you believe, you are saved in Christ.

The apostle Paul regards faith as the abandoning of all your own works, including your own achievement of salvation.

- Your own life has already proven the impossibility. Therefore your own works do not count at all.
- Faith stands in direct opposition against accomplishment. Therefore merit also does not count as it stands in opposition to mercy.
- Now we may, notwithstanding our sin, continue life with joy and confidence.
 - It does not matter should my life be wanting – God in His mercy saved me.
 - I, myself, do not need to achieve perfection – this God grants me. But I may not laud in my salvation as if it is my entitlement.
- The honour goes to Christ the Lord who, through His blood and life, granted me this gift of mercy when He was crucified and died innocently.

Amen.

Prayer

Psalm 107:2 ,4

Formulary

Psalm 23:3

To the table:

During Holy Communion: Psalm 116
: Psalm 118

Closing Prayer

Scripture Versification 10-2 {Matthew 6:9 – 13}

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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1 March 2009
Scripture Modern King James Version