

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 11 JULY 2010: EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 68:9

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 95:1

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 80:1,10

Scripture reading: Ephesians 3: 14 - 21

Scripture text: Ephesians 3:19, 20; Catechism Sunday 25

19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (Ephesians 19, 20)

Verse 19 reads:... **to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge**

Verse 20 refers to:... **according to the power that works in us**

Under the command of the Lord we often celebrate Holy Communion.

- Holy Communion deals with the knowledge and the love of Christ as well as with the omnipotence of God, as mentioned here.
- And at the same time it also deals with the Holy Spirit, working all these matters in our hearts.

It thus deals with the complete Gospel: about the full redemption-counsel of the Triune God. We are taught the Gospel in two ways.

- The Holy Spirit teaches us through the administering of the Word:
 - This is by preaching and our daily use of the Bible.
- And then He teaches us through the use of the Sacraments.
 - This is the baptism and Holy Communion.

The preaching and the sacraments are not two different matters.

- Both are the teachings of exactly the same Gospel.
- It only happens in two different ways.

Therefore we can never separate the preaching of the Word and the serving of the Sacraments.

- It is a very serious sin should we never attend church to partake in the services, but every time a Sacrament is served, by example Holy Communion, then we are present. Or when the time for baptism arrives, then we and all our relatives attend – and afterwards we again seldom attend.
- Should we do this, then we are separating the ministry of the Word and the ministry of the Sacraments, and that we may not do.
- We may *distinguish*, but not *separate*, because should we separate these two matters from each other, then there will always be one considered to be more important than the other is.
- The works of God the Holy Spirit are always on the par and worth exactly the same in the ministry of the Word as in the ministry of the Sacraments.

Should we credit the Sacraments with a higher value than it has, then we are heathens, because we then fall into external worship by making the Sacraments into idolatry.

- We may not attach any meaning, which they do not have in the Bible, to the Sacraments or to the Ministry of the Word.

What, in fact, is a sacrament?

- Sacrament is a very old word – nowadays fairly uncommon – meaning: Promise.
- But it is not an ordinary promise.
- It is the type of promise, sworn to by oath, to your Fatherland, or like the soldiers of the olden days, an oath taken on the flag of their country.

In our country we do not have such appropriates and thus our language lacks a proper translation for this word and we translate it with the word: sacrament.

- But to us sacrament no longer means taking a holy oath.
- To us it has a completely different meaning.
 - It means: it is a holy visible true sign and confirmation of a matter.
 - But then it may only be a matter constituted by God.

The sacraments are the Baptism and Holy Communion.

Our church is of judgement that according to the Bible these are the only two sacraments because they are the only two appearing in both the Old and New Testament, even though in different forms. God instituted both.

- Through the Sacraments the Lord visibly shows what He promised us in His complete Gospel of redemption.
- In order for us to understand it properly the Lord uses the things best known to us in ordinary life: water, bread and wine.

Furthermore Sacraments are seals (guarantees).

- In the olden days the king used the impression of his signet ring at the bottom of every letter written by him to prove the authenticity thereof.
- In the same way the Sacraments visually guarantees the complete contents of the Gospel to be the truth.

- As such they are nothing else than Ministering the Word.

But now we have to deal very carefully with the sacraments. Should we not attend services and cooperate therein, we may not use them.

- God, by means of the Sacrament, confirms that everything He continually teaches us is the truth.
- Should you thus not be here when God addresses us, how would you know about all about His promises?
- Why would you want confirmation about something should you not need that confirmation?

The Sacraments have a specific purpose.

They also have to teach us that our sanctification cannot be found in any other being. The sanctification is only at the omnipotent God existing since eternity.

- The Sacraments teach us that this God, by Jesus Christ, came to grant us full redemption for all our sins.
 - The sacraments must always again focus our attention to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - It must remind us that the only way to attain sanctification is to accept the cross-death of this Jesus and to believe in His work.

Holy Communion teaches it as such: We eat and drink bread and wine and our body absorbs it. It renders us energy.

- During the times of the New Testament bread and wine was a full meal.
- During this meal – keep in mind that food gives energy and life – the bread is the body of Christ and the wine His blood.
- Thus Holy Communion is a Golgotha-sermon.
- It is a sermon wherein the Holy Spirit spiritually unites us with Christ.
- This is what we call community with Christ through the use of Holy Communion.

Unification with Christ is the only way the things, referred to by our verse of text, can happen:

- Attaining knowledge of Christ's love.
- and of God's mercy,
- and of the powerful work of the Holy Spirit.

But then again: First unification to Christ by the ministering of His Word and then confirmation of our faith by the uniting to Christ by the use of the Sacraments.

The Baptism also preaches about the crucifixion of Christ.

- It preaches that the Lord's blood cleanses us from our sins just as water cleans us from our physical taint.

The Sacraments have a specific value to God.

- Therefore we have to maintain it till the end of times.
 - Any person will immediately understand that, because people and their ways change from time to time, a warning light is showing.
 - The danger is thus that people, through the passage of time, can falsify the Sacraments.

Then the mercy: Had it been only in the hands of people, it would certainly not have existed in purity any longer. The signs of the times also teach us this.

- Therefore God renders clear directions about every sacrament.
- We may not modify the Sacraments.

Should we consider the false churches of our times, then the sacraments, in nearly all instances, are the starting point of their heresy.

- The Baptism, as taught in the Bible, is no longer good enough.
 - It now has to be linked to your personal earnings.
 - You must be able to state a time and date of your conversion.
 - You must be able to make a choice for Christ.
 - Others teach that only adults may be baptised.

At Holy Communion it is no different than with baptism, because there are religious groups changing the elements of Holy Communion.

The breaking down of the Sacraments is sin.

Here against, of course stands sacramentalism, where the Sacrament is elevated to the one and only.

- This group, in turn, teaches that the use of the Sacraments pardons you from your sins.
- The Bible, there against, teaches that they are only tokens of redemption.

When you listen to all these things and read in the Bible that the power of God – the Holy Spirit – works the true faith and knowledge of salvation, then we know that a massive responsibility rests on the shoulders of the true church.

- They, in the Name of the Lord, must see to it that the sacraments are kept and administered holy.
- It goes without saying that they must keep all members who do not want to live responsibly according to the Will of the Lord, persevering in their sin, away from Holy Communion and baptism.

How could they do else?

- Should people mainly attend church when a child has to be baptised or when Holy Communion again arrives then their teaching and faith is nothing but false.
- The Formularies also teaches that such people are doing it out of superstition of habit.

Beloved, when we use Holy Communion we receive from the Lord the confirmation that our sins are forgiven.

- We are reassured of our share in the Kingdom of God.
- We are thus assured about the Love of Jesus Christ, by the power of God.
- It also means that the Lord assures us of the Holy Spirit continually leading us to rebirth and perseverance in faith.

Therefore we must, when the Spirit of God warns us about our wrong deeds and encourages us to conversion from all that is wrong, always listen.

- Remember that we are able to withstand the Holy Spirit!
- This is the sin unforgiven by God.

- In practice this means that you must follow-up the sacraments with tuition as well as with a very responsible life.

Thus live freed from fear of life because:

- The Sacraments, in fact, assure you that Jesus Christ protects you from all that you fear.
- The Sacraments further teaches that the counsel of God is steadfast and that you cannot be estranged from God.

Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead us in this love and knowledge of Jesus Christ and let us live until the time of the Perfection has arrived.

Come, let us read together Catechism Sunday 25.

Q. 65.

Since then we are made partakers of Christ and all his benefits by faith only, whence does this faith proceed?

A.

From the Holy Ghost, (a)

who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments. (b)

(a)

Eph.2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Eph.2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Eph.6:23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Philip.1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

(b)

Matt.28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Matt.28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

1 Pet.1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

1 Pet.1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Q. 66.

What are the sacraments?

A.

The sacraments are holy visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, he may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, viz., that he grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross. (a)

(a)

Gen.17:11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

Rom.4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

Deut.30:6 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

Lev.6:25 Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering: In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the LORD: it is most holy.

Heb.9:7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

Heb.9:8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

Heb.9:9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

Heb.9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

Ezek.20:12 Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.

Isa.6:6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

Isa.6:7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

Isa.54:9 For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.

Q. 67.

Are both word and sacraments, then, ordained and appointed for this end, that they may direct our faith to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, as the only ground of our salvation? (a)

A.

Yes, indeed: for the Holy Ghost teaches us in the gospel, and assures us by the sacraments, that the whole of our salvation depends upon that one sacrifice of Christ which he offered for us on the cross.

(a)

Rom.6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Gal.3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Q. 68.

How many sacraments has Christ instituted in the new covenant, or testament?

A.

Two: namely, holy baptism, and the holy supper.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 75:1

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

Amen

