

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 13 APRIL 2008: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Hymn 18-1:5

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 84:5

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.

After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 19:4.

Law

Psalm: 19:4

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: 2:1+3

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-16 and Acts 11

Text:

"It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." (Ephesians 4:11+12)

"... So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Acts 11:26)

We, who are assembled here, call ourselves Christians. Sometimes we say that someone is a "great" Christian or a "good" Christian.

- What is a Christian? Is there really such a thing?
- Is it perhaps somebody who put a lot of effort in his faith?
- Or is it somebody who draws attention by all the good he does?
- Are there different degrees of Christianity?
- How do you regard yourself? Are you a Christian?

Let us examine three issues of importance:

1. **Where does the name "*Christian*" come from?**
2. **Why is the Lord Jesus called "*Christ*"?**
3. **Are you in the service of God?**

1. **Where does the name "*Christian*" come from?**

The name "*Christian*" originated in Antioch. That we read in Acts 11:26.

The gentiles gave the people who had come to repentance this name to indicate that these people were followers of Christ.

- They were named after the One whom they worshipped.

The name "*Christian*" was often used derisively.

- Remember Agrippa's remark in Acts 26:28 to Paul:
- He asked jeeringly of Paul "*Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?*"

An example of Paul using the name in holy gravity we find in Romans 16:7.

- He sends greetings to a number of people and to Andronicus and Junias of whom he says that "*they were in Christ before I was*".

"Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was".

That explains what it means to be a Christian.

- It is to be in Christ.
- That means that you share in the anointing of the Lord Jesus.

Life was not easy for the people known as Christians.

- The name Christian was hated in the community and they were persecuted.
- The community wanted to harm them.
- That is why the apostle Peter encourages those who suffer because of it: *“However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”* (1 Peter 4:16)

In the course of time the name Christian became a name of honour among the faithful themselves. Hence, Peter could encourage the faithful with the idea that it is an honour to be named a Christian.

We too bear the name of Christ – the Lord Jesus Christ is our almighty God and Saviour. Hence, we call ourselves Christians.

2. Why is the Lord Jesus called “Christ”?

Why is Jesus the Son of God called “Christ”?

- Because He was officially ordained by God as Saviour.
- The name “Christ” has the same meaning as the Hebrew name “Messiah” – both mean the “Anointed One”.

It was customary in days gone by to anoint someone when he was confirmed in his office. It was a simple ceremony; somebody poured some scented olive oil out on the head of that person which ran down his hair and beard onto his clothes.

There are many instances of this in the Bible. Let us mention some:

- In Exodus 28:41 we read of the anointing of Aaron and his sons: *“After you put these clothes on your brother Aaron and his sons, anoint and ordain them. Consecrate them so they may serve Me as priests.”* (see also Exodus 30:30 and Leviticus 8:12)
- The anointing of Saul in 1 Samuel 9:16: *“About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him leader over my people Israel; he will deliver my people from the land of the Philistines. I have looked upon my people, for their cry has reached Me.”*
- The Lord instructed Samuel to anoint David as successor to Saul (1 Samuel 16:3): *“Invite Jesse to the sacrifice and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for Me the one I indicate.”*
“So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.” (1 Samuel 16:13)
- We read in 2 Samuel 2:4 that the people of Judah anointed David as their king after the death of Saul: *“Then the men of Judah came to Hebron and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah ...”*
- Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed Solomon king of Israel on the instructions of David: *“There have Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel. Blow the trumpet and shout: ‘Long live king Solomon!’”* (1 Kings 1:34)
- In 1 Kings 19:15 we read of the anointing of Hazael: *“The Lord said to him, ‘Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram.’”*

In the same way Jesus was anointed in the office for which God had sent Him.

- That occurred publicly when He was baptised.
- There He was anointed with the Holy Spirit to destroy the power of death over those who would follow Him – the Christians.
- That is also the difference between the anointing of the Lord Jesus and the other anointings.
- In all the other anointings the oil that was poured out was a symbol of the Holy Spirit.
- The Lord Jesus was not anointed with a symbol. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit itself.

In Ephesians 4:1 we read that we are called by God to a particular calling.

- The content of this calling is faith in Christ – to be a Christian.
- That is the same as being anointed to the service of God.
- We are “*christened*” to faith.
- Our way of life must accord with the calling we have received from God.

3. Are you in the service of God?

Christian is a name that indicates our action of following Christ in the service of God.

- There cannot be a passive Christian.
- Either one fulfils his calling to serve God or he does not.
- The works of your entire life must continuously testify thereto that you are a follower of the Lord Jesus and are fulfilling His calling.
- If this does not occur you are not a Christian.

People who are not Christians are also described in Ephesians 4. Let us measure ourselves against it. They are people who fail to fulfil their function in the church and therefore do not in love build up the body of Christ.

- They have become dulled and have surrendered themselves totally to their sensual desires and indulge in every kind of impurity.
- They continue to live as before, they do not break with the old sinful self in them who are consumed by sinful desires.
- They do not live as new people who are created in the image of God, they live contrary to the will of God and are therefore unholy.
- They are people who have not put off all falsehood, who do not speak the truth because they are not members of the same body as the true Christians.
- They are people who are embittered, enraged and malicious. They slander and do what is wrong.

In Ephesians 4 the Lord tells His Christians plainly to refrain from these things. That is why the Christians are different.

- In Ephesians 4:11 the apostle lists the gifts that the Lord gave His church, namely, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.
- Their task is to prepare the faithful for their service (to which they were anointed) to God.
- Let us put it differently; they must motivate people to do spontaneously these things that God expects of them.
- These things are what are listed in this chapter.
- They must be humble and gentle.
- Always be patient.

- Bearing with one another in love.
- Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

The Lord's purpose with all this is to make the faithful fit for their service to God and for the building up of the body of Christ.

- So we shall all eventually achieve the true unity in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God.
- Then we will no longer be children, we shall no longer be tossed up and down and to and fro by each wind of false teaching when false teachers try to entice us with cunning and craftiness.
- No, in love we shall stay with the truth and in all things grow up into Christ. He is the Head.
- When Christians become angry they must not stay angry, they must not end the day in anger.
- They must not give the devil a foothold.
- They must be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ forgave them.

Christians, therefore, are people who build up the body of Christ – which means that each member in his function as one anointed by God must completely fulfil his service to the Lord.

- We now reach the question that everyone must answer in his own heart – are you a Christian?
- Do you know the Christ of God's Word so that you as His anointed and follower are in your conduct clearly recognisable to all as a Christian?
- What does your language, clothing, entertainment show?

Are you really against the devil and his works, and is your conscience clean that you, as one anointed in the blood of Jesus Christ, are truly somebody who worships God and glorifies His Name with your whole life and all your might?

The Lord Jesus was anointed to be our highest Prophet and Teacher and our only High Priest.

- In His anointing as Prophet He reveals to us the full Counsel of God about our salvation.
- As High Priest He redeemed us with the sacrifice of His body.
- He also continuously intercedes for us with the Father.
- Because He is the anointed King of God, He rules us with His Word and Spirit.
- He guards us so that the devil cannot undermine our faith and cause us to lose our faith.

That is how the Lord Jesus as the Anointed One serves his church with the love of God: completely, with body and soul and all His might. You are a Christian:

- Which means that you bear the name of Christ.
- Which also means that you share in the anointing of the Lord Jesus and therefore you share in the complete works that go forth from the anointed of the Lord.
- Every Christian is an active prophet who must confess the Name of the living God.
- A Christian is an active priest who must consecrate himself as a living sacrifice to God and who must pass the love of God on to his fellow believers.
- Because you are the anointed king of the Lord you must with a good conscience fight the devil and his realm and we must overcome the realm of the devil in the Name of our King.

That is how a Christian lives and what he looks like.

Amen

Closing prayer

Closing Hymn: 14-1:1+2

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen

Dr MJ Du Plessis
Reformed Church Bellville
13 April 2008
NIV