

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 13 JUNE 2010: EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 86:8

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 36:2

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 71:2

Scripture reading: Mark 13:1 – 13 and Isaiah 2

Scripture text: Isaiah 2:2 – 6; Catechism Sunday 21

And it will come about in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord will be placed on the top of the mountains, and be lifted up over the hills; and all nations will come to it. And the peoples will say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will give us knowledge of his ways, and we will be guided by his word; for out of Zion the law will go out, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he will be the judge between the nations, and the peoples will be ruled by his decisions: and their swords will be turned into plough-blades, and their spears into vine-knives: no longer will the nations be turning their swords against one another, and the knowledge of war will be gone for ever. O family of Jacob, come, and let us go in the light of the Lord. (Isaiah 2:2-5)

One of the signs of the final times is that the church will become impure and that there will be a great decay of the church. This is what is now happening during our times.

- Consider history of the world: decay and degeneration is increasing amongst the nations previously known Christians.
- In our own country we experience people of the church becoming more and more subdued in their worshipping. Year after year we notice churches changing and generally excepting matters previously alien to them.
- Churches are starting to tolerate matters they previously abhorred, by example divorces and homosexuals.

Let us, led by the following matters, consider this passage of scripture:

- 1. The decay of Judah's faith.**
- 2. The Lord always remains with the true believers.**
- 3. Forward, together with the Lord!**

1. The decay of Judah's faith.

During the times of Isaiah his people were involved in war upon war and his people were continually losing their position on the ladder of nations.

- The problem is not that one of the other nations was stronger than Judah.
- The cause of the weakness lay internal to the people. The people were rotting from the inside. We read about the sins they committed: service to Mammon, hypocrisy, lies, violence, ungodliness, avarice and pride.
- The Lord regarded these sins so gravely that He subjected the children to destruction.

During these dark times of decay and destruction Isaiah came forward holding a prophecy of glorification to the people.

- He told that the Lord revealed the running of church history through the history of the world.
- At the end of history He would glorify the Church.

By this prophecy, grasping through the ages until the end, God strengthens His believers still truly believing: His true church.

- To understand this prophecy you must keep in mind that this prophecy was directed at the church in it's decay, because Israel, at that stage of the Old Testament, was the church.
- They heard, amongst the ungodliness in church, encouragement from God: He still protects and guards His church.

Isaiah was not the only one teaching about these matters.

- Micah lived during the same times of Isaiah and also taught about these matters. (Micah 4: 1 – 3)
- The two prophets thus worked shoulder to shoulder against these sins.

They taught that God would elevate Jerusalem again to the focal point where the fear/worship of God will be.

- The sorry state of turbulence and lack of will shall pass and the full light of God's glory again will radiate in His church.
- Here Isaiah writes about the work of the Holy Spirit because the city cannot pick itself up from the ashes! Somebody else will have to do it.

This prophecy indeed is spilling over onto us as well.

- The Holy Spirit, because He installs and rounds off the work of Jesus Christ in us, elevates us.
- Eventually, during the final days, it will be brought to completion.
- We confess these matters written here because we, by the church, confess that the Lord Jesus chose Himself a congregation and that He, since the creation until the Second Coming, protects and maintains, through His Spirit and Word, this congregation.

2. The Lord always remains with the true believers.

This is what is happening here – The Lord always remains with the true believers.

- Through the Holy Spirit, He calls the chosen.
- In practice it works in the way that they study the Word of the Lord and are then led, by the Word, into the facts of the faith.
- The Holy Spirit causes them to understand the Word and also opens their comprehension and then causes them to believe.

Isaiah writes that the people are *going up* to the house of the Lord and that all nations shall *flow into it*

- The people are not going out of their own choice, because the words used by the Bible teach that a very great force is driving them.
- It is the Holy Spirit powerfully moving and encouraging the chosen to gather in the Name of Jesus Christ and practice communion with God and each other.

The Holy Spirit does not only gather the church.

- He also reveals His power inside the church. He, by His power, causes the church to do the Word of God.
- This takes place by the process of conversion and perseverance. This happens when the Holy Spirit brings us to discovering ourselves in our sins.

This is when the realisation dawns upon us that we are doing something wrong.

- It is He causing us to repent and moves us to break with this sin.
- It is He who causes us to persist in these good intentions and then making our conversion a lasting reality.

In this way we share the virtues and effects of the Lord's crucifixion-death.

Listen to how Isaiah puts it (2:3):

And the peoples will say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will give us knowledge of his ways, and we will be guided by his word; for out of Zion the law will go out, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit thus works the Word and Law in us.

- The work of the Holy Spirit is also not futile. His work is always rewarded.
- Therefore He grants us the power of staying on the road of salvation so that we may end inside the Kingdom of God.
- He keeps us there! Because the communion with God is everlasting.

We know that we are sinners, but here the consolation is that the Lord never rejects His church – because His love remains to eternity.

- The Lord will punish us, and might continually punish us when we sin.
- But then His punishment is always in aid of us coming to conversion. The punishment by the Lord is always aimed at moving us back to obedience.

When we repent God always forgives all our sin.

- There is one sin He of course does not forgive, and that is sinning against the Holy Spirit.
- But this is indeed a very serious sin, because by that sin you repudiate the existence of God.

- This sin means that you sever all communion with God.

3. Forward, together with the Lord!

The meaning of this sermon for our times is that it wants to encourage us to persevere in the faith.

- This sermon intends consoling and teaching us that God is always with us.
- We desperately need this strengthening because not only does the world more and more reject the believers
- It also is gaining stronger grip on them. It has a way of taming us to matters we are not allowed to be tame to.

Sometimes, because he has a way of letting us believe that we are losing ground, the devil causes us to be dejected.

- He causes you to feel forgotten by the Lord when you are under great stress.
- Sometimes, because the fruits of our faith are not always visible, he leads you to feeling that faith is completely useless.

Now the Lord comes and consoles you:

- This church, here on earth, struggling in our times with all sorts of heresy, and sometimes barely existing, this church is saved and protected by His Power.
- The glory of this church ends in the New Jerusalem.
- We, who truly believe, will one-day stand in the rays of God's Majesty.

Therefore the responsibility rests on all of us to proclaim the Name of the Lord.

- We have the responsibility of living a life befitting this.
- We do not always do it and therefore we will have to bear the punishment of the Lord when He acts against us for having a lame faith.

It is true that Isaiah was the first to preach to the people of Judah and it is also true that Isaiah's sermon holds true for the holy universal church of the Lord, existing through the ages.

- But it is also true that it is relevant to our own congregation. We will also have to improve ourselves on specific points of our faith life.

Our congregation has certain very strong points, but we also have weak points requiring attention.

- The stronger points of our congregation are that, in general, our members are leading exemplary lives.
- The Lord shields us against many divorces, per example – it is something not often happening in our congregation.
- In general the social conduct of our congregation is beyond reproach.

But the question is whether also our spiritual lives are always as polished.

Some of the matters requiring attention are matters receiving little attention from many of us.

- Consider evening church attendance.
- Another matter is the faith training of certain members' children. Not all of us teach the Bible to our children.

Here are too many children with a poor knowledge of the Bible, and it should not be like this.

- This is a grave matter because they are the people that have to take the church a generation further through the history on the road to God's holy throne.
- How can they do it should they not be properly equipped for it?

Should we not pay utmost attention to this, in a way it will be part of the decay of the church. Because then something will be lacking to our equipment of faith.

Always keep in mind that we do receive mercy.

- God's mercy, through the Lord Jesus Christ, is abundantly granted to us.
- His crucifixion death is indeed because the Lord repairs the church – meaning us – through the Lord Jesus Christ from our sins.
- By His resurrection and victory over all the forces of hell, He recreates us to an everlasting Nation of God, eternally living.
- The Lord Jesus also follows us by His mercy of the cross throughout the ages, therefore the Holy Spirit descends over us.
- The work of the Holy Spirit into us comes by the mercy of God's counsel and the redemption of the crucifixion.

A short while ago we again celebrated Holy Communion where the Lord, at His table, strengthened our faith.

- There, by the breaking of the bread in front of our eyes, the Lord announced that He chose us to redeem us with Him.
- He gave us wine to drink reminding us about His blood so that we must remember that His power and strength always carry us.

The Lord loves us so much that He had His Son die for our sakes.

- Firstly to the forgiving of all our sins,
- but also so that we may live eternally.

Let us untangle ourselves from all the matters preventing us from visibly living faithfully. Let us enjoy the showers of God's love, mirroring it in our lives.

Let us read in our Confession about all these matters: Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 21, question 54.

Q. 54.

What believest thou concerning the "holy catholic church" of Christ?

A.

That the Son of God (a)
 from the beginning to the end of the world, (b)
 gathers, defends, and preserves (c)
 to himself by his Spirit and word, (d)
 out of the whole human race, (e)
 a church chosen to everlasting life, (f)
 agreeing in true faith; (g)
 and that I am and forever shall remain, (h)
 a living member thereof. (i)

(a)

Eph.5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Eph.4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Eph.4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Eph.4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

(b)

Ps.71:17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.

Ps.71:18 Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.

Isa.59:21 As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

1 Cor.11:26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

(c)

Matt.16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

John 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

John 10:29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

John 10:30 I and my Father are one.

Ps.129:1 <<A Song of degrees.>> Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say:

Ps.129:2 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.

Ps.129:3 The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.

Ps.129:4 The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

Ps.129:5 Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.

(d)

Isa.59:21 As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

Rom.1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Rom.10:14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

Rom.10:15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Rom.10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

Rom.10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Eph.5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

(e)

Gen.26:4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

Rev.5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

(f)

Rom.8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Rom.8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Eph.1:10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

Eph.1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Eph.1:12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Eph.1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

(g)

Acts 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Eph.4:3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Eph.4:4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Eph.4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Eph.4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

(h)

Ps.23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

1 Cor.1:8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Cor.1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

John 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

1 Pet.1:5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

(i)

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

1 John 3:19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

1 John 3:20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

1 John 3:21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

2 Cor.13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Rom.8:10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: Scripture Versification 3-4:1, 2 [Philippians 20-27]

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

Dr MJ Du Plessis

Reformed Church Bellville

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