

Sing before the service: Psalm 31:14

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: 68:15

Prayer

Psalm 36:3

Scripture reading: John 12

Scripture text: John 12:31; Catechism Lord's Day 48

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. (John 12:31 NIV-UK)

The devil is on the loose on earth – where we live. This is what the Lord says:

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8 NIV-UK)

The great dragon was hurled down— that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

(Revelation 12:9 NIV-UK)

When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. (Revelation 12:13 NIV-UK)

In practice it means that the devil is making trouble for us in all aspects of our lives.

- He will do everything he can to alienate us from the Lord.
- But his power will come to an end!

In John 12:31 and 16:11 we read that the King of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, said that the prince of the world must be driven out and that he will be driven out.

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

(John 12:31 NIV-UK)

... and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

(John 16:11 NIV-UK)

- In fact, the Lord Jesus defeated the devil through his crucifixion and He still controls him.

But it is also a fact that we are still in conflict with the devil.

- Because the Lord Jesus also uses us to limit the work of the devil through our repentance.
- Repentance, on the one hand, is conquering the devil's attacks, turning away from sin and returning to the Lord in faith.
- We can do this only if we know what it is all about – and we learn about it in God's Word and his revelation.

This is what all sermons/ministry of the Word should be about.

- The positive result of preaching is simply that we get to know God's omnipotence, his mercy

and judgement.

- The ministry of the Word tells us what the Lord expects of us, and how He enables us to do certain things and that we then indeed act accordingly.
- In this way we increasingly move away from wrong and evil and move forward on the way of holiness.

This is how the kingdom of God comes – not visibly in all aspects, but for sure, and also in our lives.

- In the first place because God builds his kingdom Himself,
- but also because the Lord uses us in the process.

We are still living in the time during which the kingdom of God is being built.

- He will finally establish it at the end of our time when He appears on the clouds.
- At that moment the church, which is still the Church militant, will become the Church triumphant.

People cannot boast of the triumph. The King of the church will take pride in the triumph, because He will have fulfilled it through his reign.

- The decisive moments in the history of the church were all brought about by Him – especially the atoning sacrifice on the cross, and victory over death when He was raised from the dead.

Isaiah teaches us that the Lord is our King, and that He will save us.

For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us. (Isaiah 33:22 NIV-UK)

- He simply teaches us that the Lord reigns and that He has a kingdom.
- In *The Lord's Prayer* we pray to our Father in heaven to let his kingdom come.
- As long as we remember that the Lord God is a Triune God, and that whatever the Father reveals to us about Himself is also true of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We also read the following about the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 1:32-33:

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end. (Luke 1:32-33 NIV-UK)

Thus the Lord Jesus Christ reigns in the kingdom of God the Father.

We belong to Jesus Christ the Lord, and therefore we are part of this kingdom that extends across all borders of time and nations. The question is now:

- Are we aware of it, and to what extent do we submit ourselves to this King who is definitely more powerful than any other power we are aware of?
- Let us look at it as believers and discuss this very important matter in religious terms; and then we see to what extent our senses have already been dulled.

Who is the King who rules? Our confession of who the Lord Jesus Christ is can be summarised as follows:

- We acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the eternal King of the church.
- We confess that his rule is so extensive and all-inclusive that it includes every single thing in

the entire creation.

- We believe that He is the King who was promised throughout the Old Testament and who then came – born as a baby from the virgin Mary.
- We also believe that He will come again and then establish his perfect kingdom for eternity.
- We especially believe that He – through the power of his grace – moves us to repent.
 - He does it through his Word and his Holy Spirit.
 - We read his Word and hear it, and at the same time his Spirit submits us to Him so that we want to obey Him wholeheartedly.

Hence it is obvious that people regard the reign of the King Jesus Christ in two different ways.

- Those who hate Him will immediately feel threatened because they do not want to obey Him, and they do not want to submit to the restrictions of his will.
- The true believer, on the other hand, appreciates the rule of this King because to him it implies the guarantee and certainty of all things.
 - This person experiences the glorious feeling in his heart because he knows that his life and his future are safe, and that even his daily life is guaranteed by the power and wisdom of this eternal Ruler.

The sincere believer also experiences ever increasingly the reign and kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ, because he is aware of how the Lord more and more makes him subject to Him.

- This moves the believer to submit more and more to the Lord;
- to increasingly turn away from his sins and at the same time grow in faith so that a new life in him grows towards perfection.

The more we grow in faith, the more we become aware of the dangers around us. And we really are in danger because there is a vast area with many invisible things around us.

- This invisible world contains evil powers which are hard to resist.
- Hence we must pray for protection – we must pray for the powerful protection of God.
- We must also pray to the Lord to help us, who are weak, to overcome sins.
- Therefore: Pray for God's kingdom to come.

We know the church is the centre of God's covenant and therefore also of his kingdom.

- In the church are the people with whom God established his covenant in Jesus Christ.
- They are the people who believe in the love and protection of God.

When the King of the church comes on the clouds, we will be perfect and live eternally, with unspeakable glory that will be revealed in us. See Romans 8:18.

This is after all what we confess in Catechism Lord's Day 48. Join me in reading it.

123. Q. What is the second petition?

A. Thy kingdom come. That is: So rule us by Thy Word and Spirit that more and more we submit to Thee.[1] Preserve and increase Thy church.[2] Destroy the works of the devil, every power that raises itself against Thee, and every conspiracy against Thy holy Word.[3] Do all this until the fulness of Thy kingdom comes, wherein Thou shalt be all in all.[4]

[1] Ps. 119:5, 105; 143:10; Matt. 6:33. [2] Ps. 51:18; 122:6-9; Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:42-47. [3] Rom. 16:20; I John 3:8. [4] Rom. 8:22, 23; I Cor. 15:28; Rev. 22: 17, 20.

Amen.

Closing prayer

Closing hymn: Psalm 145:1, 12

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
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