

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 8 MARCH 2009: EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 24:4

*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 48:4

**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 68:8

**Scripture reading:** John 14

**Scripture text:** John 14:6 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 6

**Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."**

People begging for food and drink have probably been with us from the beginning of time. The Lord Jesus tells us of one such beggar in the New Testament:

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat from what fell from the rich man's table. (Luke 16:19-20)

Beggars only beg for their daily bread.

- But who has the insight of knowing that we all live in great misery which makes the cares of every day pale into insignificance?
- Who senses the anguish of the moment when we must move on out of this life into the life

after death when he is not ready for it?

There are a few issues which are highly important in the matter of the Mediator between God and mankind:

- 1. The first is that salvation is only for people who need it.**
- 2. The second is that the person seeking a Saviour must seek one who satisfies certain requirements.**
- 3. The third is the value of such Saviour.**
- 4. Fourthly is the question where do we learn of such Saviour?**

**1. The first is that salvation is only for people who need it.**

Thomas was worried about a simple earthly problem: where do I go when the Lord Jesus is no longer on earth?

- The Lord Jesus provided them each day with what they needed
- Then, one day, He tells them that He will leave them:
  - He is going to His Father's house but they need not fear, for in His Father's house there are many rooms,
  - He is going there to prepare a place for them.

Thomas was worried:

- In what village would this be?
- How would he know the way thereto, for he thought that this place was somewhere on earth;
- The Lord Jesus replied to his question that we must seek and follow Him, then we will find our eternal address;
- In that way the hope for deliverance is engendered in all of mankind.

The person who lives only for this life and who hopes in Christ only for this life, is the most miserable of men, writes the apostle Paul:

**“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”** (1 Corinthians 15:19)

- Prosperity and material goods are important but can never provide permanent salvation of our life.

The main question is: How am I saved?

- How do I some day enter the eternal light with God?
- We can be saved in only one way and that is that satisfaction be made to God's wrath for our sin.
- The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write in Romans 8: 4 that the righteous requirements of the law must be fully met in us who live according to the Spirit.
- They who live according to the flesh are mankind in its sin.

They who wish to be saved must live according too the Spirit. In other words, the justice of the LORD's law must be fulfilled in their life.

Romans 8 verses 5 and 6 note the difference between the spiritual and sinful person:

- The life of the sinful person revolves around death
- Death in this sense goes further than death of the body at the end of one's life
- Death means here to be in hell – to be without God after this life on earth.

That is the essence of the matter – this is what it is all about:

- This is the issue which makes us all afraid to die, for we do not know where we shall open our eyes – the fear that we might be in hell!

That is why we all feel this pressing need for salvation;

- Somewhere there must be hope
- Somewhere in His Counsel God must have mercy.

God's grace was announced already at the beginning of time

- When God punished man and the earth He also spoke of His grace:-
- out of the offspring of Eve someone would be born who would work salvation.

Mankind's total history shows that we ourselves cannot bring about salvation. We cannot do anything that will let us escape the Lord's punishment.

- Our best efforts are still tainted by sin
- In Psalm 51:5 David writes that he was sinful from birth, sinful at the time his mother conceived him! From the first moments of his existence he and sin were allies!
- Nobody who comes into the world in this condition can by his own effort escape or overcome sin.

Hence all we have is the hope in the Saviour promised by God. That we can also read in the words of Thomas when he asked where we would see the Lord when He leaves us.

The Lord was God Himself – but He was also at the same time man like us. In His answer to Thomas He explains the principle:

- Our Saviour must first of all be a true man but simultaneously also God Himself.
- He is the ONE! We therefore have hope for redemption. He fulfils God's promise and prepares a place for us in the Hereafter.

## **2. The second is that the person seeking a Saviour must seek one who satisfies certain requirements.**

We immediately see that here two issues are important. The Mediator must be a true man and at the same time true God. That is contained in the Lord's answer to Thomas.

Why must he be in the first place a true man and be absolutely without sin and absolutely perfect?

- The main reason is that it is not our decision but God's providence.
- He judged that a man must satisfy His judgement and justice.
- God's justice demands this because it was human nature that was disobedient to Him
  - According to God's justice it would be unjust to punish a nature different from that which transgressed
  - Put differently, the justice of God requires that only the nature that sinned is to be punished.

That is why an animal or anything else in creation is unable to reconcile man with God.

- The question then springs to mind – why did the Lord introduce the bringing of sacrifices in the Old Testament?
- The answer is that the sacrifices did not bring about reconciliation each time an animal was offered.
- Each occasion was only a prophecy or prediction of the way in which the Mediator would one day fulfil His ministry.

At the same time the Mediator must be sinless, because the Fall into sin and the life thereafter demonstrates the inability of man.

- A sinful man cannot survive before God
- No sinful person can stand in the holy light that shines around the Holy Trinity.
- That is why the One who appears before God's throne of judgement must be a perfectly sinless One, otherwise no reconciliation can come about.

The requirement of the Godhead of our Mediator is now clear.

- If man is unable to survive before God when He is kind, how would he be able to bear the burden of God's wrath without being destroyed?
- The burden is too heavy for man and the angels:
  - Hence we read of the angels who serve the Lord in heaven having a special pair of wings with which to cover their faces so that they not be destroyed.

We should also not forget that the ministry of redemption has consequences to this day

- The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross, that is true, but it is equally true that He sent us another Comforter
- The Spirit of God to confirm the salvation to us and to guide us in the ways of the Lord.
- If the Mediator is not God he is unable to send us the Holy Spirit!

The Mediator who is to save us from our sins must also have the power to reconcile the sins of Adam.

- The act of salvation must therefore be retroactive to creation and also proactive until the Second Coming
- The act of salvation must also be so powerful that it is able to withstand all times and all new things that will come in time – otherwise it becomes obsolete.
- It is now very clear. The Mediator can only be the LORD. God Himself in the ministry of One of His Persons.

### **3. The third is the value of the Saviour.**

The value of the Saviour we seek – and have received – is:

- He removes the curse of God over mankind and creation. We read in the Bible that creation is eagerly awaiting salvation.
- The further value is that the Saviour brings about a division between those people who are worthy of sharing in the honour and glory of God and those who have dishonoured the LORD and refused to acknowledge, confess and express in their life His justice and truth.
- Another value of the Saviour (Mediator) and His ministry is that we have received the privilege that the Spirit of God dwells in us.

- Which means that we are continually purified spiritually. In other words, that when we are faced with adversity we are always strengthened.
- It is the Spirit of God which gives us the power to survive and to keep the faith.
- It is the Spirit of God that inspires us to take the right decision when needed.
- It is the Spirit of God that adorns us with the image of God, for then we can reveal true knowledge, justice and holiness – although still broken and in sin.
- The Saviour gives me life eternal. When I die I shall appear alive before God although my body remains lifeless on earth.
- The Saviour's greatest power and almight is revealed in the deeds He does when He returns!
  - He raises my body in perfected form out of the earth and reunites it with my soul
  - He creates a totally perfect new earth (and heaven) and He lets me live in my perfected form forever on the new earth where I shall glorify and praise Him eternally.

#### **4. Fourthly is the question where do we learn of such Saviour?**

Where do we learn of the Mediator? There are three sources:

- The first and most important mentioned in the Heidelberg Catechism is the Bible. The Word of God.
  - As we have seen, the Lord commenced to reveal the Mediator already on the day of punishment. Thereafter the Bible reveals according to a fixed pattern the coming and the ministry of the Mediator.
  - There were promises, prophecies in the Old Testament of the Messiah to come and what He would do
  - Then there is the confirmation in the New Testament that Christ has come and fulfilled His ministry as prophesied.
- Which brings us to the second source of knowledge, not mentioned by the Catechism, namely the revelation by the Holy Spirit
  - In our time the Holy Spirit reveals the Lord Jesus and the Father's love and grace for us.
  - Even should we have the Bible, but the Holy Spirit does not move us to insight and belief in Christ, then all is in vain.
- The last source is nature. We read in Romans 1 that everything there is to know about God is clearly revealed in His works and can be known therefrom.
  - From this we may infer that the need for a Mediator may be learned from nature.
  - That is true:
    - take drought – that is a cry for salvation
    - take disease – that is a cry for salvation
    - the Apostle Paul says that all of creation sighs.

We can summarise it as follows: To know the gospel means:

- to know the Lord Jesus;
- to glorify and praise Him in love and deep dependence;
- to thank Him in profound gratitude for His love and salvation

Let us read Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's day 6, where all this is gathered:

#### **Question 16: Why must He be a true and sinless man?**

**Answer:** Because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which has sinned should make satisfaction for sin; but no man, being himself a sinner, could satisfy for others. Rom 5:12+15; 1Cor 15:21; Heb 2:14-16; 7:26-27; Peter 3:18.

**Question 17: Why must he be at the same time true God?**

**Answer:** That by the power of His Godhead He might bear in His manhood the burden of God's wrath and so obtain for and restore to us righteousness and life.

Isa 9:5; 53:5+11; Deut 4:24; Nah 1:6; Ps 130:3; John 3:16; 2 Cor 5:21;

**Question 18: But who now is that Mediator, who is at the same time true God and true, sinless man?**

**Answer:** Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is freely given unto us for complete redemption and righteousness.

Mathew 1:21-23; Luke 2:11; 1 Tim 2:5; 3:16; 1 Cor 1:30.

**Question 19: From where do you know this?**

**Answer:** From the Holy Gospel; which God Himself first revealed in Paradise; afterwards proclaimed by the holy patriarchs and prophets, and foreshadowed by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the Law, and finally fulfilled by His wellbeloved Son. Gen 3:13; 12:3; 22:18; 49:10; Isa 53; Jer 23:5-6; Mic 7:18-20; Acts 10:43; Heb 1:1; 10:1-10; Lev 1:7; John 5:46; Rom 10:4; Gal 4:4-5; Col 2:17.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 118:13.

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

8 March 2009

Scripture: New International Version