

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE : Sunday 20 November 2011 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 146:1,2,3

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 118:12,13

Confession of faith: Apostolic

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy universal Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting

Amen.

After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 32:1,3

Law

Psalm: 32:1,2

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation of 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

Scripture Versification 5-11:1,4,6

Scripture reading: Leviticus 16:1-34

Scripture text: Leviticus 16:15-22

After that, he shall kill the goat for the sin-offering for the people, bring its blood into the Most Holy Place, and sprinkle it on the lid and then in front of the Covenant box, as he did with the bull's blood. In this way he will perform the ritual to purify the Most Holy Place from the uncleanness of the people of Israel and from all their sins. He must do this to the tent, because it stands in the middle of the camp, which is ritually unclean. From the time Aaron enters the Most Holy Place to perform the ritual of purification until he comes out, there must be no-one in the Tent. When he has performed the ritual for himself, his family, and the whole community, he must then go out to the altar for burnt-offerings and purify it. He must take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it all over the projections at the corners of the altar. With his finger he must sprinkle some of the blood on the altar seven times. In this way he is to purify it from the sins of the people of Israel and make it holy. When Aaron has finished performing the ritual to purify the Most Holy Place, the rest of the Tent of the Lord's presence, and the altar, he shall present to the Lord the live goat chosen for Azazel. He shall put both his hands on the goat's head and confess over it all the evils, sins and rebellions of the people of Israel, and so transfer them to the goat's head. Then the goat is to be driven off into the desert by someone appointed to do it. The Goat will carry all their sins away with him into some uninhabited land. (Lev. 16:15-22. Good News Bible)

Theme: Our sins are washed off and carried away by Christ

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, we may never have any doubt in our minds that the Lord wants to have an intimate relationship with His people. In fact, this is one of the most important focus points in each of the offerings described in the book Leviticus. With the burnt offering the Lord teaches us that we can commit ourselves totally to Him. Because He wants a close relationship with us we may have an intimately personal relationship with Him. With the grain offering the Lord teaches us that He wants more than just ourselves in relationship with Him, that our daily work is part of our relationship with Him.

In the same way our relationships with other people, family and friends is a part of our relationship with Him. That is why He gave the fellowship/peace/meal offering, in order for His people to be able to strengthen their relationships in His presence.

Naturally man cannot just be man. In his deepest being man is fallen, a sinner. For this reason it happens that a person does and says things that are wrong without realizing they are wrong. It is these wrongful things, these sinful words and actions that threaten man's relationship with God. God is holy and perfectly good and cannot stand sin. Still the Lord wants His people to live in a close intimate relationship with Him. No estrangement may come between man and His God. For this reason, God gave two offerings, the trespass offering and the sin offering, so that man can return to God when estrangement has occurred due to sin.

With these two offerings that the Lord gave to Israel, he opened the possibility for each person to be cleansed of the taint of sin and be reconciled with God. There may be nothing that prevents a person

from returning to the Lord. Thus, we can be sure that the Lord does everything possible in order for His people to live close to Him.

But now, God knows us much better than we know ourselves. He also knows that man can, without meaning to, forget that he or she sinned. A sin of which a person can easily forget is not considered less serious because one forgets it so easily. Sin remains dangerous, even if we are not aware of it. And, when we have already long forgotten about the sin, the truth remains that we had saddened the Holy Spirit. Therefore these sins must also be removed. It is for this purpose that the Lord instituted the Day of Atonement. Stated simply: the Day of Atonement was the day of cleansing done once a year in order to clean away the sin which was looked over during the normal cleansing.

Concerning the offerings brought on the Day of Atonement, the Holy spirit focuses our attention this morning on the two goat rams that were brought as sin-offering for the congregation of Israelites. We must take note from the beginning that the two goats were not separate offerings. The two rams are one offering, the sin-offering for Israel. Aäron had to draw lots over the goats. The one goat is tossed for the Lord and he has to be slaughtered as sin-offering for the Israelites. The other goat is tossed for Azazel and must remain alive.

The blood of the goat that was tossed for the Lord is caught in a bowl when it is slaughtered. With this blood, the high priest does not enter into the Holy Place of the Tent of the Lord as with the normal sin-offering. With this blood he must enter into the Holiest part behind the curtain of the temple where the golden Ark of the Covenant was. He must sprinkle the blood on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant and seven times on the soil in front of the Ark. The Lord Himself explains what the consequence of this action is. The blood cleanses the Holiest of holies of the uncleanness of the Israelites, of their transgressions and all of their sins.

Then the high priest exits with the blood and rubs it on the horns of the burnt-offering altar and sprinkles the blood seven times on the altar. In this manner the altar is purified of the impurity of the Israelites. This action also clearly shows how terrible sin is. Not only is man tainted by his sin but also everything around him, even the Most Holy Place, where God's throne was, was tainted by sin. The blood from the first goat then washed away all the sins of Israel.

After the kidneys , fat and the best part of the liver of the goat, was burnt on the altar, the rest of the carcass was burnt outside the camp of the Israelites. No one, not even the priests were allowed to eat of this meat. No one may benefit from sin.

This sin-offering, like all the others, prophesied the perfect sacrifice the Lord would provide. As the blood of goats cannot remove all sin, Israel were taught to yearn for a better sacrifice, which was what Jesus brought when He died on the cross. In Hebrews 9:12 the Holy Spirit says: **When Christ went through the tent and entered once and for all into the Most Holy Place, he did not take the blood of goats and bulls to offer as a sacrifice; rather, he took his own blood and obtained eternal salvation for us.**

The blood of Christ which He gave willingly for us washes away our sins completely. With his blood our consciences are cleared, and our souls as white as wool, whiter than snow.

When we confess our debt sincerely before the Lord, the Holy Spirit washes us clean with the blood of Christ. When we appear before God we look like people who had not done those terrible sins. We are washed clean of all that tainted us.

Beloved, when you wash yourself in water, the dirt that you wash off must go somewhere. It does not disappear, it settles in the water. The blood of the goat washed away the sins of Israel also went somewhere. Aäron, as high priest, temporarily took on the sins of Israel in order to confess it over the head of the other goat, the one for Azazel, when he places his hands on the head of the goat.

A lot has been written about the meaning of the name Azazel and we can discuss it at length, but what is important here is what happens to the second goat. After the high priest confessed all the sins, which he temporarily carried over the goat, the goat is chased into the desert. This goat, says the Lord, now becomes the bearer of Israel's sin. He carries the sin of Israel into the desert, to an uninhabitable place, in order for them to be completely free. The goat takes the sin to where it belongs, as sin has the ability to take something, which is beautiful and precious and turns it into something unsightly and horrible.

The desert was seen as the place where the devil and his evil spirits reside. Sin does not belong with people who belong to the Lord, but with the devil and his evil spirits. That is why the goat for Azazel carries the sins to the desert. By sending away the sin, the Lord says: Satan here are the sins which you gave and orchestrated. You can have your things back now. Your evil deeds and words has no more power over the children of the Lord.

Brothers, sisters and children Jesus also fulfilled this part of the Day of Atonement for us. Jesus, our only High priest, took all our debt on Himself, not to confess it over a goat, but to carry it away from us, Himself. During the three hours of darkness on Calvary, when his Father completely abandoned Him, Jesus encountered Satan and his evil spirits.

He suffered hellish pain and sorrow, because He carried away all our sins and handed them back to Satan. Let's put it like this: He gave to Satan that which belongs to him. Now, Satan may do with it as he wishes, but his evil no longer has a say over those who belong to God through Christ.

Beloved, we are truly washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus entered into those three hours abandoned by God, we can be sure that He also took away all of our sins. May today's communion assure us of the grace of our heavenly Father.

Amen!

Scripture Versification 5-1:2, 7

Formulary for Communion

Psalm 23:1, 3

Celebration of Communion

Scripture Versification 5-2

Scripture Versification 5-4

Final prayer

Closing Psalm: 103:2, 6

The Lord bless and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you, the Lord turn His countenance to you and give peace.

Amen

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Scripture Good News Bible