

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 20 JANUARY 2008: MORNING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 86:1

*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 89:1

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 catholic\* 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 25:8.*

Law

Psalm: 25:8

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: 34

**Scripture:** Luke 11:14-37

**Text:** Luke 11:21-22

*"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armour in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils."*

The Lord drew the admiration of the crowd when He drove out this demon.

- It was a difficult matter for we learn from the relation in other gospels that the person was deaf, mute and blind.
- The Greek words employed there show this (compare Matthew 12:33-30 and 38-45, Matthew 9:32-34 and Mark 3:22-27).

It appears that the devil had blocked all routes of entry in this person.

- He tried to prevent any form of aid or salvation for this man.
- The Lord Jesus compelled the devil to leave this man.
- The man could then talk and hear and see.

In this sermon we consider the meaning to us of this event and at the same time the hold the devil has on people and how we may escape from it. In doing so we consider the following:

1. **The devil causes some people to hate the Lord Jesus and rebel against Him.**
2. **The devil causes others to doubt and to question the authority of Jesus.**
3. **How do we escape from it?**

### 1. **The devil causes some people to hate the Lord Jesus and rebel against Him**

The moment the Lord Jesus overcame the devil and expelled him from this man, he attacked the Lord Jesus from two other sides:

- The event drew admiration from part of the crowd.
- They wondered whether He could be the promised Messiah. (Matthew 12:33)
- That was not what the devil wanted and he immediately started a fresh onslaught.

Note how crafty the devil is:

- While part of the crowd admires Jesus.
- Another part starts to demolish the work of Jesus.

The onslaught was aimed at making the people hesitant and let them break off fellowship with Him. That is why in other gospels where this event is related, a warning is added not to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit – Matthew 12:31-33.

In this onslaught the devil uses the leaders of the church to turn the crowd against Jesus. (Verse 15)

- Matthew recalls that some in the crowd wondered whether Jesus was the longed for Son of David.
- This idea the leaders of church wanted to suppress for if it took hold they would lose their influence in the church.

They could not deny the miracle worked by Jesus because the man healed was there before them and speaking.

- So they followed a different route and tied the miracle to the devil himself.
- Jesus is accused of driving out the devil in the name of Beelzebub (the chief of the devils, that is Satan himself).

Jesus replies to this accusation that any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined (verse 17). That would also be the truth if the devil fought against himself (verse 18).

- With these words Jesus put the ball back into their court – if He expelled the devil in the name of Beelzebub, in whose name do their followers do so?
- They would be compelled to answer that they did so in the name of Beelzebub.
- The followers of the Pharisees would deny this.
- The only inference remaining would be that Jesus does so in the power of God.

This is a terribly important fact for it carries the message that from it they can see that the kingdom of God has come to them because they can see the fruit of it before them (verse 20).

The situation is explained by the Lord with a parable in which the Lord tells how the devil (a strong man) guards his possessions (people).

- He thinks that his property is safe because he has the armour (verse 21). But a stronger man (Jesus Christ) comes and overpowers him and takes away his possessions (the faithful).
- With it the Lord Jesus puts into perspective what He did when driving out the demon – He took the devil's victims away from him and redeemed them with His redemptive ministry.

The Lord refers to a fact which the people with Him apparently were well aware of.

- In Satan's kingdom there is unity.
- There is no disunity.
- The unity in Satan's kingdom is aimed at being in opposition to the Lord and to subject people to the devil.

The simile is derived from Isaiah 49:24-25 where the same is prophesied.

- The simile of a powerful warrior holding captives is used there.
- A more powerful person comes who rescues the captives and sets them free.

The parable the Lord Jesus tells of the strong man and the stronger one who takes away his possessions describes the struggle between the kingdom of Satan and Jesus Christ.

- The Lord Jesus uses Isaiah's simile together with the presence of the man out of whom He had expelled the demon to show the crowd that He was the stronger man.
- He is already busy with His redemptive ministry – the presence of the man out of whom the demon was driven is the proof thereof.

What makes the matter even clearer is the fact that Jesus says that He drove out the demon *"by the finger of God"*.

- Those are the exact words used by the Egyptians during the plague of gnats.
- They also said: *"This is the finger of God"*. (Exodus 8:19)
- The important point is that the Egyptians said this when the Lord was saving His people from Egypt.
- Jesus Christ now uses the same words while He is busy saving His elect from the power of Satan.

The people who are there listening to Him must decide where they stand (verse 23).

- With whom are they?
- With the Lord or with the devil?
- This demand is made of us too.

In the Person and ministry of the Lord Jesus the kingdom of God came so close to them that they saw how the Lord Jesus plucked one of them out of the hands of Satan.

- Hence the demand: where do you stand?
- If you stand against Jesus Christ you shall remain defenceless to Satan.

That applies equally to the man from whom the demon was expelled. He cannot carry on in a vacuum.

- He must let the Holy Spirit move into him otherwise the demon who was expelled will return with seven devils more wicked than him and move in.
- The devil will not leave him alone, just as he does not leave anybody alone, consider what the end of such person will be.

In the passage about the evil spirit the Lord Jesus emphasises being “*empty*”.

- One must ensure that one is filled but with the correct content.
- The healed person must ensure that his life and body is filled by the Lord Jesus otherwise the devil will attack him again and put him in a worse condition than he was before.

Therefore the demand Jesus made to those standing around Him applies as much to us today as it did to them.

- Those who are against Him are working for Satan.
- If we do not allow ourselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit and the fear of the Lord the devil will attack us just as the evil spirit would return with seven spirits more wicked than itself (verses 24-26).

## **2. The devil causes others to doubt and to question the authority of Jesus**

Luke points out that there were two groups who opposed Jesus.

- The one group consisted of those who said openly said that He drove out the demon in the name of Beelzebub.
- Having dealt with this group and their charge Jesus deals with the second group, those who sought a sign.

The group now opposing Jesus consisted of the doubters.

- In issue is His authority, His authority is questioned.
- He must provide a sign from heaven to prove that God gave Him authority to drive out demons (verse 16).
- The Greek grammar shows that this question was put repeatedly.

The answer the Lord gives is in two parts.

- The first deals with the doubters and the second speaks of the eye that is the lamp of the body.
- The Lord motivates what He says with a parable – a lamp is put in a place where it sheds light for all (verse 33).
- When the body's lamp is good it enlightens the entire body but if it is bad the whole body is full of darkness (verse 34).

It means that where there is true worship there will be true enlightenment.

- Everybody therefore has the duty to ensure that there is true worship so that the light of God's glory may shine in his life (verse 36).
- They have witnessed with their own eyes how the light of God fell onto this man possessed by the demon but it did not enter their bodies.

They wanted a sign similar to what happened at Mount Carmel when the Lord sent fire from heaven that consumed everything – 1 Kings 18:38 and 2 Kings 1:10-12.

- It is still dark in their bodies.
- The way the Lord deals with the matter exposes the doubters.
- They doubt because they do not open their eyes and have no insight.

Usually we would be patient with doubters but the Lord Jesus calls them a "*wicked generation*".

- The request for a sign from heaven therefore comes from the devil.
- The issue was not the healing or their own faith.
- To them it was all about Jesus identifying Himself.
- The driving out of the demon was not enough.
- They required a sign from heaven with which Jesus could prove to be God's Messenger.

They expected Jesus to prove that God's power was available to Him at any moment.

- The request was therefore nothing else but a temptation for the sign was not sought to the greater glory of God but to satisfy their human curiosity.
- It was an attempt at seducing the Lord Jesus Christ to sin for if Jesus complied the devil would have succeeded in the temptation he put before Jesus after His baptism.
- Then the devil wanted Jesus to worship him.

See what the devil does when he attacks the faithful.

- The devil upsets the order.
- He wants God to account to man.
- Whereas it is man who must account to God why he cannot or will not believe in Him.

That is why the Lord Jesus ends this passage with a sharp rebuke. The Lord owes the doubters nothing.

- He shall call them to account.
- Jesus reminds the doubters of Jonah and also of the Queen of the South who came to Solomon to listen to his wisdom.
- This Queen travelled a great distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon.
- She will bear witness against these Jews at the day of judgment and Jesus is greater than Solomon (verse 31).
- So will the people of Nineveh who repented at the preaching of Jonah.

There people did not receive any signs from heaven yet they repented immediately.

Jesus says that at the day of judgment these people will arise and bear witness against the people who now seek a sign from heaven. The implication is that the evidence of those who believed without any sign from heaven will condemn these people who demand a sign to being cast into hell.

### 3. How do we escape from it?

Our salvation lies in the faith in and worship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The Lord Jesus Himself is the revelation of God. He is the sign from heaven – we must only see it.
- We must also be able to see the effect of His redemptive ministry and adopt it.
- The kingdom of the Lord is not confirmed to us by any other signs from heaven than the redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ on the cross.
- His arising from the dead as well as His ascension to heaven and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit are nothing else but direct signs from heaven.

While the Lord was addressing the crowd telling them that something must happen in one's life, that one must take up arms against the devil, a woman called out that His mother was blessed for having Him as a son.

- Although in this call important matters are absent there is a positive side to it.
- The positive is that she shows herself to be siding with Jesus against the devil.
- She is not on the same level as the two groups that attacked the Lord.
- She is beginning to comprehend some of what Jesus is preaching.
- What her call lacks is that it shows nothing of her personal relationship of faith with the Lord.

How does the Lord Jesus deal with her call? Jesus again puts the matter into perspective.

- One is blessed only if one hears the word of God and obeys it (verse 28).
- He does not deny the relationship between Himself and His mother.
- But He emphasises immediately the better relationship between Himself and His heavenly Father – *“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it”*.
- The angel also said to Mary that she was blessed but it was also prophesied by Simeon that a sword would pierce her soul (Luke 2:35).

The salvation that God gives is better, superior and unbreakable.

- He, who is Jesus, brought this salvation to them.
- The man who drove out the demon is the proof: *“But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you”*. (Verse 20)

That is what must be remembered. The Lord Jesus is actually making the words and the promises of the Father come true in the redemptive ministry He is effecting.

- The redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ places a great responsibility on us.
- As the people standing around the Lord did we too must take a stand (verse 23).
- We must be with the Lord.
- This demand is put to us urgently.

In the Person and ministry of Jesus the kingdom of God came so near us that He poured out on us His Holy Spirit.

- He snatched us out of Satan's hands.
- That is why we must realise that if we stand against Jesus Christ we shall be defenceless against Satan.

We cannot live in a vacuum – we must let the Holy Spirit come into us so that our whole life and body is occupied by the Lord Jesus forever, otherwise the devil together with seven other devils will move in. The devil will not and does not want to leave us in peace.

Listen to the Holy Spirit encouraging us to keep our faith:

*“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right Hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:1-3)*

**Amen**

Closing prayer

Closing Psalm: 84:1+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**

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