

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 21 MARCH 2010: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before (standing): Psalm 121:2

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

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 71:2

Law

Psalm: 71:2

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 91:8

Scripture reading: Luke 12

Scripture text: Luke 12:6,7

"Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Luke 12:6-7)

Should your relationship with God be in order there is no way you need to live under tension. Especially not towards people.

- This passage containing our Scripture text is in fact a sermon against human fear, delivered by the Lord.
- The background is a conflict that arose between the Lord and the Pharisees.

This is what took place: A Pharisee invited the Lord to supper and took exception to the Lord not washing His hands prior to the meal.

- The other people, because they could not understand how and where the Lord obtained the self-confidence to mingle with such important people and so easily daring to do what He did, were also amazed!
- Normally we are concerned about what other people think or say about us.
- We are continually under the human pressure of standards we have to comply to. Social pressure.

How does one deal with this type of situation of people continually placing you under some kind of obligation? What must you do or say? Consider the conduct of the Lord Jesus.

These people were upset about exterior matters:

- Prior to the meal the Lord Jesus did not wash His hands.
- These same complaining people only cleaned the outside of their cups.

The viewpoint of the Lord Jesus facing them was that not only did the Lord make the outside, He also made the inside!

- This principle does not only address your eating utensils and manners.
- It also addresses your faith!

The solution to the problem is thus that you must only do what the Lord expects from you, because He has to be feared, not the people.

The Lord's judgement is clear:

- Such people follow a type of self-glorification.
- A great shock is awaiting such people – they will discover that they are guilty of deceit – self-deceit!
- They are not deceiving the Lord only!

Meanwhile the Lord has already left the house of the Pharisee and many people gathered around Him. The Lord Jesus then started teaching them the true facts of life.

It deals with fear. The Lord teaches that there are two kinds of fear:

- Fear about people and
- fearing God.

Which is the most important? Fear God, says Jesus Christ.

It is striking that the heaven is a place of mercy and perfection, but to get there we must fear God.

- It is written nowhere that we should fear the devil.
- Odd, because he is a bad, unprincipled and cruel creature.
- His dwelling is made up out of apprehension and pain!
- It is because the satan does not reject anybody. All are welcome – the worse and more unprincipled the better!

God is different.

- He does not, like the devil, gather bad and unprincipled people.
- Neither does He want deceitful and sanctimonious people.
- He rejects the unholy!

In a certain sense life revolves around the final judgement!

Therefore the Lord made His sermon as practical as possible.

- Do not fear earthly matters.
- Do not be uneasy about your own needs.
- Do not fear people going around threatening you.
- Do not even fear your own death.

Nobody or any circumstance here on earth can lay a hand upon your soul. Neither can anybody bring your sanctification under threat.

- The utmost you could fear is death. And to God that is no limitation.
- Luke 20 strikingly records that God has power over the living and dead.
- Also that those who physically die are still alive with Him.

The matter about what people have to say is also rejected by Jesus' statement that no human will judge you either as just or unjust in your life hereafter.

- The Lord Himself – and Him alone – judges about your fidelity or infidelity.
- In verse 5 it is recorded that even after your earthly death He still has power over you.

Therefore the words of the Lord Jesus are absolute and final:

- I will show you whom to fear.
- Here He is of course referring to His crucifixion and resurrection, because then He revealed His power as the God to be feared.
- He certainly is also referring to the events surrounding the descent of the Holy Spirit, because to the non-believers, it was a terrifying experience!
- He – Jesus Christ – is the One that must be feared.

It was against the background of the Lord Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees that He told the people to beware of hypocrisy.

- Beware that you do not lack sincerity and truth.
- In the case of the Pharisees it became apparent that they took care of the external but in their hearts their lives were impure.

The crux of the application lies in the importance that our lives must be good and sincere.

- God never forgets about you and therefore you must firstly see to it that, facing Him, you do not bear a false attitude of life.

- Further you may live with the confidence that should you, facing Him, live honestly and purely you need not fear any human or his constraint over you.
- Time and all sorts of passing standards do not, like a human, border God. Only He alone can punish you to body and soul.

Thereafter the Lord Jesus started explaining the comfort of His sermon to the people.

- To fear God does not mean facing God shivering in fear!
- It also means that you, because He is a God of love and mercy, must have trust in Him.

We must remember that the Lord always cares for us!

- He has our welfare at heart! For us, He cares to the smallest detail!
- We, who fear the Lord, are never exposed to destruction – to affliction and battle, yes, to destruction, never.
- Therefore in our fear, we must also be honest facing the Lord, because should we be false, He will be aware of it!

The Lord Jesus describes this matter by an image.

- The Lord takes care of sparrows – all of them.
- Should we fear Him, How much more would He take care of us?
- He even counts the hairs on our heads.

Five sparrows sold for two copper coins.

- To us this is a very trivial matter – the poorest Jews, in order to have some sort of meat on their table, bought the sparrows as food.
- The sparrows are one of the most insignificant things crossing the lives of the ordinary man.

But to God, these sparrows are important, because He even determines the date of their death: not one of them falls to earth without the Father! And then the great comfort:

Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows!

My fears and me enjoy particular attention from the Lord.

- The Lord always protects and cares for me!
- Thus as long as, facing God, I just live honestly, I have nothing to fear from this world.

The Lord Jesus gave us the same mercy.

- God, because of our many sins, could easily have exterminated and destroyed all of us, but He did not do it.
- He planned for His Son to come and live devoid of any sin and to die later, bearing all our sins.
- In the formulary for our Holy Communion it is written that God, rather than leaving it unpunished, punished all our sins to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But at the same time Christ also proved that we could trust in God.

- On the third day He rose from death and appeared to many people.
- With that He demonstrated, so that we may be without any shadow of a doubt, God's power over death.
- Consider this against the background of our scripture text: God even determines the death of the sparrows and He looks after each one of them.
- Now consider how much more trouble He takes towards us – because we are worth more.

Then came the descent of the Holy Spirit.

- In fact He teaches this power and mercy of God towards us!
- In the eyes of God we are worth more than sparrows and seeing that He so diligently looks after them, how much more does He look after us!

Brothers and sisters, the result of this sermon by the Lord Jesus Christ is that we must not be enslaved to all sorts of fears. When we are convinced that we are doing what God asks, then we just do it – notwithstanding any human threat.

Live by the Lord Jesus Christ – this means living with the knowledge that God protects you and that His mercy is also rendering you loving care.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 116:1, 4

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

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21 March 2010
Scripture Modern King James Version