

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE : SUNDAY 27 MARCH 2011

EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 107:10

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 66:6

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

Psalm 4:3

Scripture reading: Luke 15

Scripture text: Luke 15:14-19; Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 5

14 "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

15 "Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 "And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,

19 "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."

Except for the Lord Jesus Christ – whilst he was a human – there has, since Adam, never been a human able to stand his own against sin.

When we sin a chain of events takes place.

- Firstly it immediately aggravates the Lord.
- Secondly it causes us to instantly come under the judgement of the Lord.
- Furthermore it is so that, due to our sin, we estrange ourselves from the Lord.

Now we face the question: How do we return to the Lord?

- In the image of the parable: How do we return to the House of the Father?

- For that, Jesus Christ was born as a human on our earth: For us, His death and resurrection reopened the road back to the Lord.

This parable tells about a man who exchanged the security of a parental home for the hullabaloo and noise of the world.

- Eventually the world sucked him so dry that he could no longer bear it there as well and had to exchange the worldly matters for the empty food troughs of hungry pigs.
- This parable causes you to feel how everything in the vicinity cried out that he had start realizing: He somewhere and somehow had to come to himself, weigh his priorities and discover what he had lost and where he was headed to.

In this parable the Lord thus depicts the process of reflection every person has to go through in order of coming to the realization of his guilt of sin.

- Every person should come to the point of realization that there is something a lot more pressing than physical hunger or poverty.
- He must realize that the hunger of his soul for redemption and salvation from his death of sin is much larger than the pleasures of this world.

We pay attention to two matters:

- 1. When does a human become aware of this need?**
- 2. How does a human satisfy this need?**

1. When does a human become aware of this need?

Mankind normally comes to the realization of his guilt of sin when landing into embarrassment with life.

- It usually is when he becomes seriously ill or suddenly falls into deep poverty and despite all his efforts cannot escape from the situation.
- In practice it usually works in the way that man only becomes convinced of his condition of sin to the Lord when his life becomes entangled and moves him to the realization of his weakness.

It is as if such drastic events pluck man from his arrogance to see himself in the nudity of his taint of sin. Then such person starts asking for salvation and a savior.

It is not in all instances that man has first to undergo an attack of physical distress before coming to conversion.

- But in all instances you first have to realise how serious the Lord regards all sin.
- He says that the wages of sin is death.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 6:23)

Then only – after understanding your own guilt of sin – will you plea for help to the Lord to come out of this miserable condition.

Have you considered it that this is what, at the table of Holy Communion, we sing in the words of Psalm 116:

The cords of death held me in deep despair;

**The terrors of the grave caused me to languish.
I suffered untold grief and bitter anguish;
In my distress I turned to God in prayer.
I cried to Him, "Oh, I beseech Thee, LORD,
Preserve my life and prove Thyself my Savior!"**

It is when man can no longer hide his spiritual poverty and when everything he hoped on falls away from him. Then he realizes that he desperately needs a mediator between him and God.

- This is especially when the believer honestly tests his life to all ten of the Lord's Commandments that he realizes his own power to be just a rubbish dump upon which he is incinerating his own glory.
- No emergency is greater than the distress of sin and the gaping hell facing you.

Should you now go to the Bible and consider the Ten Commandments, this matter intensifies.

- The reason being that the Law lets you well understand that the Law of the Lord demands that sin against Him must be punished.
- Therefore the Lord has already very early, in the promise that the Messiah would bear our punishment, caused His mercy to be known.
- The Lord Jesus Christ was punished so severely that He had to die in order to atone our sins to God.

Isaiah 53:4-7 teaches that the Messiah will take all our grieves and sorrows onto Him. It points to it that He would be punished for our sins.

Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

(Isaiah 53:4-7)

- The point is that all the people not experiencing this promise of salvation will be lost eternally.
- Furthermore it is also so that the people not experiencing their plight of faith will not experience their own helplessness or any fear of God.

2. How does a human satisfy this need?

There are various ways how people try solving this tension.

- The most common solution is that people want to become blessed through their own works.
- They pretend that everything they do and say is to the glory of the Lord, but should we carefully consider the basis of their principles, it is clear that they are actually elevating themselves.

Such people want to bypass the death and assault of hell by their prayers, offers and good deeds.

- They always have a solid argument that they themselves want to handle all initiatives regarding their salvation.

- They themselves want to make the choice of serving God and also in what way they want to serve Him.

In this type of religious aim there is something mankind wants to retain for himself.

- He is not prepared to offer up everything.
- Therefore he retains the right of, partially or fully in his own power, attaining his own glory.

Do not think that this is a religious concept exclusive to our times only.

- Even in the times of the Lord it already existed.
- Do you remember the rich young man who asked the Lord if he could follow Him? (Matthew 19:16 onwards)
- When it became clear that he reasoned that because he upheld all the commandments he could thereby attain his own glory.

But the moment the Lord commanded him to sell everything he owned (so that he had no more earthly means of ensuring his existence and glory) and then return to follow the Lord, he was not prepared in complying.

That is exactly the same principle the heathens had through the passage of time.

- The Bible, in fact, teaches something completely different, namely that in fact mankind has to bear the punishment of the Lord, but that there is nobody able to do so.
- One person also cannot pay for another as all people are sinners, and somebody having sins himself cannot pay for another.
- *Angels or animals, because the justness of God demands that the specific creature that sinned must bear the punishment for sin, can also not engineer atonement for us.*
- Money cannot atone for this matter. You cannot buy your salvation, nor can you bribe the Lord.

Now this does not mean that salvation is completely impossible. Salvation is possible, but then we have to disconnect our search for salvation from our creation and relinquish all creatures.

- Amidst creation no savior is to be found.
- God Himself prepared our salvation – He supplied the Mediator.

Due to our sins the Lord cannot come to us other than in His wrath.

- And we, on our part, cannot go to the Lord other than in our sins.
- Therefore God supplied a Mediator that is human, but at the same time is also God.

There is a reason why the mediator had to have two natures, namely a human and a godly nature.

- The human nature is because sinners are humans and the Lord wanted to, and would not, punish nobody else than humans for their sins committed against Him.
- The godly nature of the Mediator is because only God alone would be able to bear the wrath of the Lord against sin.

Indeed the Mediator then came to live and bear the punishment of God for the complete mankind.

- He elevated us from our broken by sin condition and repaired us in our relationship with God.
- Now we are in the situation that we are completely redeemed by Jesus Christ, because for those who worship Him, He atoned fully atoned to God.

But you must realize that this salvation is only for those people who know their own impurity and personal helplessness.

- Only believers confessing their own taint of sin and dependency on God are saved by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- They do not need to add all sorts of additives as if the redemption work of Jesus Christ does need aid to attain their sanctification.

They have:

- Forgiveness of sin,
- repair of God's image in them, and
- eternal joy.

When they come to facing judgement the doors of hell are locked to them, and through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ gain access to God's everlasting Kingdom.

Let us read what the Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 5 teaches about this:

Q. 12.

Since then, by the righteous judgment of God, we deserve temporal and eternal punishment, is there no way by which we may escape that punishment, and be again received into favour?

A.

God will have his justice satisfied: (a)

and therefore we must make this full satisfaction, either by ourselves, or by another. (b)

(a)

Gen.2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Exod.20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Exod.23:7 Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.

Ezek.18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Matt.5:26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

2 Thess.1:6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

Luke 16:2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

(b)

Rom.8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

Rom.8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Q. 13.

Can we ourselves then make this satisfaction?

A.

By no means; but on the contrary we daily increase our debt. (a)

(a)

Job 9:2 I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?

Job 9:3 If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.

Job 15:15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.

Job 15:16 How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water? Job

4:18 Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly:

Job 4:19 How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?

Ps.130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

Matt.6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Matt.18:25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

Matt.16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Q. 14.

Can there be found anywhere, one, who is a mere creature, able to satisfy for us?

A.

None; for, first, God will not punish any other creature for the sin which man has committed; (a) and further, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, so as to deliver others from it. (b)

(a)

Ezek.18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Gen.3:17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Heb.2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Heb.2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Heb.2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

Heb.2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

(b)

Nah.1:6 Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

Ps.130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

Q. 15.

What sort of a mediator and deliverer then must we seek for?

A.

For one who is very man, and perfectly (a)
 righteous; (b)
 and yet more powerful than all creatures; that is, one who is also very God. (c)

(a)

1 Cor.15:21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

Jer.33:16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall

dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

Isa.53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

2 Cor.5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

(b)

Heb.7:26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

Heb.7:16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

(c)

Isa.7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isa.9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Rom.9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Jer.23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. Jer.23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Luke 11:22 But when a stronger than he (a strong man armed) shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Song: Scripture Versification 5-3:1 [Revelation 5:19 – 14]

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 Modern King James Version