

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: THURSDAY 13 MAY 2010: ASCENSION DAY

Sing before: Psalm 98:4

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 47:4

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

Scripture Versification: 12-2:1,3 [The twelve Articles]

Scripture reading: Luke 19

Scripture text: Luke 19:12, 13, 15. Catechism Lord's Day 18.

Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. "So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' (Luke 19:12-13)

"And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. (Luke 19:15)

This is a remarkable parable the Lord Jesus is telling about Himself.

- He is the man of noble birth
- He became a servant, He became a human in our world!
- Because He died for everybody given by the Father to Him, He, for Himself, ransomed subjects from the power of His enemy.

After He died here and arose from death He went, in order to receive a kingdom, to a distant land.

- This was His ascension – thus: His entrance to the throne of God.
- In two places we read the identical words in Psalm 24 how this event was prophesied:
Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. (Psalm 24:7 and 9)

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)

The theme of this sermon is: Fruitful Lives.

Some believers have a weak outlook towards God and His church.

- When spoken to they have so many stories that most of the house call is occupied by it.
- Some even become angry with the church counsel when they are spoken to about their lives regarding the church and their God in heaven.
- While we expect the return of the Lord Jesus, who ascended to heaven, to gather us as arisen and recreated people with Him into eternity – and also because we are busy preparing ourselves to again, at the end of the month, celebrate Holy Communion with the Lord Jesus – everyone of us must investigate our lives and determine whether we serve the ascended Lord Jesus in the way it should be done.

The Lord Jesus tells about a man of noble birth who had to become king of a certain kingdom.

- This man is the Son of God who came to earth to be the King.
- But His own people hated this Man.
- They did not want Him to be King. In this parable they were even prepared to send a delegation after Him trying to prevent Him from becoming their King.

In John 1:11 we read that Jesus Christ, through His birth, came to His own, but His people did not want to accept Him.

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. (John 1:11)

We read about two groups of people.

- The one group is the direct enemies of the prospective King.
- The other group is His slaves. They are His housemates, living under the same roof as Him.
- Let us call them the congregation belonging to the church of the Lord.

The King selected ten of his slaves and handed each a **mina**.

- Some English Bibles translates a mina to a pound.
- This was a coin worth about R70.(10 Dollars)
- The slaves were instructed to do business with the money so that when the King returned he could draw the interest thereof.

The King now is journeying.

- He was crucified, arose from death and ascended to heaven. This is the journey to the distant land Jesus referred to.
- A land so far away as the heaven is from us. A Land where He received the Kingship from God the Father.

Something else, clearly coming to the foreground, is the fact that absolutely nothing can prevent Him from receiving His Kingship.

After receiving His kingship He will return. Here the Lord Jesus is referring to His Second Coming.

- Although he left for awhile, He **will** return.

- Nobody knows how long He will stay away. Jesus does also not tell how long He will stay away.
- But He does tell that when He returns to earth it will be a day of judgement. A day when He will deal with all the people who stayed behind.

Firstly He called all His slaves. To each one He issued a command.

- Before He departed He laid the responsibility of caring for his kingdom on earth onto them.
- He expected them to see that the flourishing/expansion of the church. He expects them to comply with their tasks.

He does not want to be told stories. He wants to see the fruit of their work.

Here Jesus is referring to us – we who are the members of His church.

- We are the slaves who received talents from the Lord – not to keep for ourselves.
- The money that we have, the intelligence and personality we received was not given by the Lord to be wrapped in a cloth and to be buried.
- He wants to see how it worked in the church.

Only three slaves were mentioned.

- The first used his talent and made a profit of ten more talents thus handing back eleven talents for the one that was entrusted to him.
- The Lord is satisfied with this slave. He told him that He appreciated the fact that he was so trustworthy and have done well in a small thing and would be given a ruler's position in heaven. Not all people are capable of delivering the same as others.

The second slave faced the Lord with five talents of profit.

- Although he did not have ten, the Lord still had great appreciation for the fact that this man did his duty.
- Here the Lord enquires after the end result of our lives.

The lives of the first two slaves bore different fruits.

- The first toiled harder than the second did.
- The King was satisfied with both but they were not similarly rewarded.
 - The first received a greater deal of glory than the second did.
 - In the Kingdom of the King both were rewarded relative to the amount of responsibility shown by them in the work for his church.

Nothing is told about seven slaves but there was one more about whom the Lord wants us to learn.

- The last slave let the responsibility, given to him by the Lord, lie idle.
- He did not work at all.
- He is similar to some of the members of the church of the Lord. This man was quite happy to be one of the new King's slaves, but neglected his duties to this Kingdom.

Read what the Lord says about those who do not want to properly comply with their duties.

- Those only half-and-half attending church and only partially compassionate are similar to this last slave who just watched how the others had to build on the kingdom, giving everything they had.
- He did not receive a share in the kingdom of God.

- And that is not all. The Lord also took all that he had. God does not allow squandering of His gifts. He grants it to people willing to work with it.

The slave tendered excuses. He was scared of possibly losing his coins.

- But Jesus, Himself, faced him. And the Lord knows when somebody is lying because he did not feel like rendering his part.
- Jesus did not, like the reverend and elder, have no reply.
- Straightforward and clearly He told this slave that he could at least have banked the money.
- He had no excuse.
- This man's excuse was used to convict him. Jesus told him: "By the words of your mouth you will be judged, you bad servant."

Let everyone search his soul. We are celebrating Ascension.

- Hereby we commemorate the departure of our King to the distant land where he went to receive His Kingship.
- But the ascension also ensures us that this King will return to do judgement. – This he said Himself.

This parable speaks to all of us. God does not allow playing with Him. His ascension is the proof of His absolute omnipotence. He departed from us to receive His Kingship. Nobody was able to prevent Him – not even death.

Now we are awaiting the Second Coming. The Second Coming of our King has no time for excuses.

- Read what is written in verse 27. Before Him the King has His enemies put to death.
- During that time there will be no mercy for the non and half-believers.
- But to us who believe the matter differs: We live like servants expecting the return of their King. Then He will turn us into His children.

We, the people of the present, in another way, are similar to the servants.

- Those who accomplished their task had nothing to say, except being able to show the fruits of their toil.
- But the one who did not do his work and neglected his responsibility had a lot to say. To the King he delivered a sermon telling him how well he knew Him and what the reason for his laziness was.

Beloved, you have heard what is written in the read passage. Our King is returning.

- The angel told the disciples that He would return in the same way He departed.
- The Lord Jesus gave us the command to proclaim and build the Kingdom during the times between Ascension and the Second Coming.
- We did not, like His slaves, receive coins – He favoured us with His Holy Spirit to be able to do this work well and properly.

He will be calling together His servants so that He may see what each of them earned by the gifts granted to them by Him and according to that reward us.

We are waiting on the Second Coming of our King. Let us use our talent – not bury our faith and gifts in a cloth. We declare ourselves willing to work for the kingdom of God until He comes to take us into His Glory.

I would like to read to you from our confession (Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 18) what we confess about this:

Q. 46.

How dost thou understand these words, "he ascended into heaven"?

A.

That Christ, in sight of his disciples, was taken up from earth into heaven; (a) and that he continues there for our interest, (b) until he comes again to judge the quick and the dead. (c)

(a)

Acts 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Matt.26:64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Mark 16:19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

Luke 24:51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

(b)

Heb.7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Heb.4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

Heb.9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

Rom.8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Eph.4:10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

Col.3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

(c)

Acts 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Matt.24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Q. 47.

Is not Christ then with us even to the end of the world, as he has promised? (a)

A.

Christ is very man and very God; with respect to his human nature, he is no more on earth; (b) but with respect to his Godhead, majesty, grace and spirit, he is at no time absent from us. (c)

(a)

Matt.28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

(b)

Heb.8:4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

Matt.26:11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

John 16:28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. John 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Acts 3:21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

(c)

John 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

John 14:18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

John 14:19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

Matt.28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Eph.4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

Eph.4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Q. 48.

But if his human nature is not present, wherever his Godhead is, are not then these two natures in Christ separated from one another?

A.

Not as all, for since the Godhead is illimitable and omnipresent, (a) it must necessarily follow that the same is beyond the limits of the human nature he assumed, (b) and yet is nevertheless in this human nature, and remains personally united to it.

(a)

Acts 7:49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

Jer.23:24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

(b)

Col.2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. John 3:13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

John 11:15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

Matt.28:6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

Q. 49.

Of what advantage to us is Christ's ascension into heaven?

A.

First, that he is our advocate in the presence of his Father in heaven; (a)

secondly, that we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that he, as the head, will also take up to himself, us, his members; (b)

thirdly, that he sends us his Spirit as an earnest, (c)

by whose power we "seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and not things on earth." (d)

(a)

1 John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

Rom.8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

(b)

John 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 17:24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

John 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

Eph.2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

(c)

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

John 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

2 Cor.1:22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

2 Cor.5:5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

(d)

Col.3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Philip.3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 32:3

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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Scripture Modern King James Version**