

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 25 JANUARY 2009: EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Scripture Versification 2-4:1 (33){1John3:1-4}

*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 119:18

**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 43:5

Scripture reading: Mark 12

Scripture text: **Mark 12:29,30 Catechism Sunday 2**

**Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 'And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. (Mark 12:29,30)**

The life of a Christian is a life of continual soul-searching.

- It is a life discovering yourself through your sin and then, with your whole being, struggling to overcome the evil.
- Our formulary for Holy Communion clearly points out that only those able to confess their sin and perceive their lives against the law of God can enjoy the tangible proof of mercy. Only such people can enjoy the meal of forgiveness at the table of Holy Communion.

What does soul-searching introspection mean? Firstly let us see what it does not mean.

- It does not mean that only once every three months you, in a more or lesser degree, must reflect upon your sins.
- It does not mean that we, for some time, may carry on living without having a real perspective on the rights and wrongs of our lives.
- It thus means that we must continually monitor our lives in the mirror of God's law.

One of the shortest questions and answers in our confession is: Whence knowest thou thy misery?  
Out of the law of God!

- But do you, at the same, time realise how difficult it is to live by this simple answer?
- Mostly our life degenerates into vigorous opposition to the Lord. We repeatedly transgress every commandment.
- Basically it is the same as resistance against the will of God and is thus unvarnished disobedience.

Do you believe it? Most of us do not want to believe it.

- Many of us do not want to acknowledge that we, as our children are disobedient towards us, are contradictory and disobedient to the law of God!
- In our lives there is also less confession of these sins against God than there should be.

We all know our miseries.

- Or at least sometimes we speak about sin and misery even although we do not always realise the full depth of it.
- Should we ask: Whence knowest thou thy misery? We get quite different answers from people.
  - o One says: my experience teaches me my misery. Every day I struggle with it.
    - This is an incorrect answer as it does not have sufficient depth.
  - o A second one says: my conscience teaches me my sin and miseries.
    - Surely an answer even less acceptable than the first answer. Because we all are more or less unscrupulous. There is not a single person whose conscience has not been marred by sin.
- A third answers that his heart teaches him.
  - o Because we all know the language of the heart it really sounds like a good answer.

Our confession teaches that this cannot be.

- Because our hearts are just as corrupt as we are, you cannot, by your heart, know your condition.
- The Bible in fact teaches that sin like murder and adultery and bad thoughts originate from the heart.
- Our confession of sin can thus not possibly be born in our hearts only.
- Our hearts have become dulled and tainted by sin just like us.

Where then do we get a yardstick to gauge our lives? We have to go to God.

- He is the Only One remaining pure.
- The Only One who cannot be tainted by sin.
- Therefore the law of the Lord is the only means able to really convert a person.

The law of the Lord never vacillates.

- The Lord's law never changes or varies.
- This is, in other words, the only yardstick to which we continually can test our lives.
- The law of the Lord is the only means able to continually bring us to repentance – in as much that we will realise the full impact of our sinful condition.

It then is impossible for us to say that we have done only two or three deeds for which we have to repent to God.

- Then our heart and conscience will charge us with many more matters, because under the law of the Lord we stand guilty in every respect.
- There is no guesswork. He commands.

Introspection thus is to go and look at your life as reflected by the mirror of God's law.

- Introspection further entails grasping with thankfulness Jesus Christ and His merit won through His crucifixion.
- Because then only I fully learn how much He really did for me.

The law teaches us to love. The Lord Jesus gives the abridgement as already given in the Old Testament:

**"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy 6:5)**

**Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' "This is the first and great commandment. "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (Matthew 22:37-39)**

Thereafter the Lord said that on these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

- This is true. These two commandments encompass the entire Ten Commandments.
  - o Because in the Ten Commandments the first four deal with love for God and the execution thereof.
  - o And the other six deal with the love towards your neighbour and how we should live in love together with our neighbour.

But there is a big difference. Here Jesus teaches us that we are not concerned with only this or that commandment.

- We are concerned with the law of God in its totality.
- We may also put it differently: here the Lord Jesus teaches us to forget all the do's and don'ts of the law and to only comply with the "must" of the law.
- Now it is not about the negatives: you may not kill or you may not steal and you may not commit adultery.

It is about the positives: you must love!

- All these commandments are about love.
- Love for God and love for your neighbour.

The fact of Jesus transforming the commandments to positives causes a different light to fall on our lives:

- The fact that I have never killed anybody means nothing!
- Had the opportunity occurred, I might possibly have done it.
- Perhaps, because we do not want to fall into the hands of the police, we have not yet committed murder, but in my heart, hatred against one of my neighbours is burning.

When Jesus now turns this matter around, a new light shines.

- The fact that we have not yet committed adultery does not mean that our faith and love of our neighbour withheld us from it.

- It may possibly be that we, due to the public shame connected thereto, withheld ourselves from it.

Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, without looking at every commandment in this way, it is clear that contrary to Jesus' commandment of love, we live in sin permanently.

- In essence every one of these commandments deals with the neighbour and our love for our neighbour.
- How much more guilty would we not stand should we approach the love for God in this way?

We all lack a lot of love for God, how often do all of us, for the purposes of our own sinful interests, not push His Person and His Word to the background?

- The law chases all of us. Not one of us remotely complies with the demands put to us by the law of God.
- Fortunately with God there is grace in abundance.
  - o The Lord Jesus Christ Himself came to fulfil the law.
  - o Therefore the law that we read was not written by Moses, but by Christ Himself.
  - o Moses also wrote what we may not do. Jesus told what we *must* do.

The knowledge of our misery grants us the largest richness: the redemption in Jesus Christ.

- Therefore guard against doing soul-searching only when the time for Holy Communion is drawing near.
- Live like somebody whose heart, during every moment, is raised towards Christ.
- Then you will experience the overwhelming love of Christ.

In these days the need for continual introspection is greater than ever before.

- The end of time is drawing near and thus it is time for the law of God to be written not only on paper.
- The time has arrived for the law of God to become a confession written into our hearts.
- Therefore now, more than ever, we have to guard against worship of tradition.
- Consider our love towards God and towards our neighbour.

In chapter 1 verse 23 – 25 James wrote in his letter:

**For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.** (James 1:23-25)

The law of God is like a good mirror reflecting all your mistakes – and should you heed it and convert, you will obtain the mercy of Christ.

Do not exit church today forgetting what the reflection of your life looks like. This is the man who has lost everything. Look in order to see and to do something about the matter!

Let us together read Catechism Sunday 2:

**Q. 3.**

**Whence knowest thou thy misery?**

**A.**

Out of the law of God. (a)

(a)

Rom.3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

**Q. 4.**

**What does the law of God require of us?**

**A.**

Christ teaches us that briefly, Matt. 22:37-40, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and the great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (a)

(a)

Deut.6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Lev.19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

Mark 12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

Luke 10:27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

**Q. 5.**

**Canst thou keep all these things perfectly?**

**A.**

In no wise; (a) for I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbour.(b)

(a)

Rom.3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

Rom.3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Rom.3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

(b)

Rom.8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Eph.2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Tit.3:3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

Gen.6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Gen.8:21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

Jer.17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Rom.7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 33

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 MKJV