

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 16 MAY 2010: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 63:4

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 85:3

Confession of faith: Nicene

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

And we believe one holy catholic* and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 102:1

Law

Psalm: 102:1

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 77:5

Scripture reading: Mark 4:35-41

Scripture text: Mark 4:38.

Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

In the boat the disciples wished to know whether the Lord cared.

- From the passages in the Bible that we shall consider, *it is clear that it is not God who does not care, but that we are the ones who do not care.*
- It is the way of most people to forget God, but when they are in trouble the Lord is called upon to account and to explain why He has forgotten us.

In the Old Testament it is written that the realm of the dead is the destination of the wicked. They who forget God shall return to the grave. (Psalm 9:17)

The disciples reproachfully woke the Lord Jesus with the question: *Teacher, don't you care if we drown?*

- They thought death was imminent because their boat could sink at any moment and the Lord lies asleep on a cushion.
- It would appear as if they thought that the Lord did not care whether their boat should founder and all of them drown, or not.

Often He uses our stress and suffering in a miraculous way to bring us and others salvation.

- Consider that Joseph certainly did not know why his brothers threw him into a well for him die there.
- He probably also did not know why the Lord permitted him to be sold and subsequently be locked up in jail.
- But this was God's way of bringing his family to the refuge He prepared for them.

Likewise the Lord used the fear of the disciples to increase their faith and to make them understand His almight. In that way the Lord revealed that He does care and that in their darkest hour He is with the faithful.

The trouble is that, some people, only when they are in need, ask: Has the Lord forgotten us?

- When we are joyful or prosperous the Lord is not sought.
- Then there is no urgent need for *the Lord to care.*

Let us look at two men who forgot the Lord and at some stage *did not care for the Lord*.

- The one is Peter and the other is Judas. There is a remarkable similarity between these two men – yet the one is lost and the other is saved.
 - Both were members of a political party known as the Sicarii (the bearers of knives).
 - Both denied and betrayed the Lord.
- Judas does so by confirming that he knows the Lord:
 - He points Him out by kissing Him so that He could be arrested.
- Peter does it by denying that he knows the Lord:
 - He swears that he does not know the Man.

Both are upset about what they have done.

Both are sorrowful after the event.

- Peter is sorrowful because he has sinned.
- Judas is sorrowful because he is upset about the consequences of his sin.

From here on the difference between the two men becomes clear:

- When Peter denied the Lord the third time the cock crowed
 - Peter then remembered that Jesus had said: “Before the cock crows, you will disown Me three times.”
 - He then went outside and wept bitterly.

In his remorse he went out into the quiet of the night to seek God.

- Thereafter he remained within the circle of the faithful.
- He did not leave the community of the church.
- **Immediately a cock crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the cock crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.** (Matthew 26:74-75)

It is the way of the Lord to forgive people who are remorseful and to take them back completely into His grace. Listen to some passages from the Bible:

Because Rehoboam humbled himself, the Lord’s anger turned from him, and he was not totally destroyed. Indeed, there was some good in Judah. (2 Chronicles 12:12)

Then Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart, as did the people of Jerusalem; therefore the Lord’s wrath did not come upon them during the days of Hezekiah. (2 Chronicles 32:26)

...if my people, who are called by my Name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

“Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD. “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word...” (Isaiah 66:2)

Judas’ conduct was different. *Judas went to the church – not to pray but to try to undo his work.*

When Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." (Matthew 27:3)

He argued with them and tried to undo his betrayal by returning the money.

- But they answered him that it was not their concern.
- It was his responsibility.
- Eventually he threw the money into the temple and left to hang himself.

The difference between Peter and Judas is that Peter was truly remorseful whereas Judas merely felt regret.

- There is true remorse when there is sorrow about a wrong done to the Lord.
 - Someone who is remorseful wants to put matters right with the Lord.
 - In Hebrews we find the case of Esau who was unable to be remorseful:
 - **Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.** (Hebrews 12:17)
- Regret differs from remorse. There is regret when someone harmed somebody else or himself and he feels unhappy because he could have done better. In Ezekiel we find a passage that explains it:
- **The time has come, the day has arrived. Let not the buyer rejoice nor the seller grieve, for wrath is upon the whole crowd.** (Ezekiel 7:12)

The end of Peter's remorse was the eternal life that God gives in Jesus Christ, whereas the end of Judas' regret was the eternal death.

The warning is clear:

- Where there is only regret, a dark curtain terminates the history of that person.
- But where the grace of the Lord is remembered and the sinner seeks the Lord with true remorse, there he finds forgiveness of sin and the eternal life.

In the boat the disciples wished to know whether the Lord cared.

- From the history we have looked at it is clear that it is not God who does not care, but that we do not care.
- Often it is in the ways in which we deal with **remember** that we do more wrong.

Let us consider what it is that the Lord remembers and how he remembers.

- In His remembering the grace of the Lord comes first. The prophet Isaiah writes that the Lord never forgets us, even when we sin. He put it like this:
 - **"Remember these things, O Jacob, for you are my servant, O Israel. I have made you, you are my servant; O Israel, I will not forget you."** (Isaiah 44:21)

In another passage in the Bible it is written that God is not unjust and will not forget our work and the love we have shown Him. The prophet Amos also writes that the LORD swore that He would never forget the good deeds we did. (Amos 8:7)

God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them. (Hebrews 6:10)

The LORD has sworn by the Pride of Jacob: “I will never forget anything they have done.” (Amos 8:7)

It is dangerous to think that you can rely on the Bible and say that God is not unjust and will not forget our works (Hebrews 6:10) *if your life does not show such works in practice.*

- If you want to appeal to the Lord’s grace, at least your life must show that you live in the Lord.
- The Holy Spirit writes in the Word of God that the LORD hears the needy. The LORD is attentive to the poor. It is written in Psalm 69 that He does not forget his people who are captive:
 - The **LORD hears the needy and does not despise his captive people.** (Psalm 69:33)

This brings us to the second matter which the Lord always remembers.

- He does not forget to punish the people who refuse to repent. Consider what is written in Revelation 16:19:
The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of His wrath.

Where do we, who believe in the Lord, stand?

- When we look at history it appears as if there are times when the Lord does not care.
- Remember the terrible oppression the Israelites suffered in Egypt: they were forced to do hard labour and their infant sons were thrown into the Nile to feed the crocodiles.

But the Lord comforts.

- Through Jesus Christ He is an eternal father to us who looks down upon us with eternal tenderness when we are in pain and sorrow.
- The Cross is the guarantee that He cares for us in such times.
- He carries us through trials. He gives us strength when we are weak. This He proves to the disciples in quieting the wind and calming the sea.

Yet the Lord wants us to beseech Him for His grace when times are dark to us. He wants us to remain courageous. Therefore we must be strong in the Lord and seek the Lord in our need.

God has a glorious purpose with our trials.

- He wants our total humanity to soften so that we can be cleansed of all pride and overestimation of our merit.
- He wants us to know our frailty and sinful decadence so that we may know so much more clearly the meaning of grace when He saves us from it.

The Bible speaks of us when it is written that they will ask the way to Zion and will come to the Lord:

They will ask the way to Zion and turn their faces towards it. They will come and bind themselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten. (Jeremiah 50:5)

Listen again: an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten – that is God’s forgiveness through the death on the cross of Jesus Christ.

- The substance of the covenant is that our sins are punished already so that we may be forgiven and live eternally.
- We shall never be forgotten by the Lord, provided we pray for forgiveness with true remorse for all our sins and with the will to live to serve God.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: Psalm 121:4.

May 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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Scripture: New International version.