

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 31 JANUARY 2010: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 118:13

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 2:6

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 universal 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 Scripture versification 5-3:1 [Revelation 5:9-14]

Law

Scripture Versification 5-3:1

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 16:5

Scripture reading: Micah 6

Scripture text: Micah 6:6

With what shall I come before the Lord, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? (Micah 6:6)

The crux of true worship does not only exist in executing all sorts of external procedures. It exists out of:

- the worshipper knowing the righteousness of God.
- practising his love, and
- living in humbleness with God.

The Lord acts as the Prosecutor of the believers.

- Poetically the mountains are depicted as unchanging and the foundations of earth.
- Because the mountains were there from the beginning, He calls them as judges in this matter.

At the onset of this court case there is something very noteworthy.

- We hear no aggression in the charge of the Lord against the people.
- Very tenderly He calls them "My people".
 - By this it is clear that the Lord intends drawing, through this court case, His children close to Him.
 - He wants to reconcile. He wants to move them to properly worshipping Him again.

The charge of the Lord starts with a question: O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you?

- The harm done to them by the Lord apparently wearied and tired them.
- The Lord asks them for an answer.
- They must state whether the things He did to them was the cause of them becoming so tired that they could no longer worship Him.

Lovingly the Lord takes them through their history.

- Every event recalled by the Lord must remind them that the Lord only bestowed tender mercies upon them.
- He only gave them love and protection. Are these matters that can cause human faith to become lame and tired?

He reminds them of their times in Egypt.

- There, as a nation, they were dying out because all their sons were fed to the crocodiles and the women would eventually have intermarried with the Egyptians.

- That would have meant the end of the Israelites.

The Lord fetched them from this state of affairs. The Lord states that He redeemed them from the house of slavery.

- He refers to the disgraceful and opprobrious conditions they were in.
- He redeemed them from it. This means that some sort of ransom was paid for their freedom and rejuvenation.

By the explanation of the baptising formulary of the crossing of the Red Sea we know that all these events took place through the reconciliation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The crossing of the Red Sea was thus foreplay to the baptism – as such the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord lets them remember that in Egypt they were unskilled. They did not have any leaders.

- Because the Egyptians reasoned for them, they did not have people capable of thinking towards their own affairs.
- Amongst their own people nobody able to organise so many people, getting them to move on, or to look after their legal rights or to lead them in their worshipping.

Then the Lord supplied such people – two brothers and their sister: Moses, Aaron and Miriam. The Lord remembers that He sent these three before the people.

- Although, in those times, there was not much difference between the laws of the land and the law of the Lord, Moses was more the leader and handler of the law and justice.
- Aaron took a pertinent position: He was the Lord's first official high priest.
- Miriam led them in community singing. She was deeply religious and, amongst other matters, taught the people the song written by Moses and had the people sing it after crossing the Red Sea. The people loved her very much.

The journey not all profitable. Some adversity also took place.

- They learnt the art of war and eventually became the most feared people.
- But there was one power they could not attack with their weapons – the satan. Against him their defences were pretty useless.
- The Lord reminds them of the time the devil wanted to use Balak in imprecating them.

It is important to note that the Lord does not declare imprecation by the devil as worthless.

The workings of the devil are there and have a bad influence on those imprecated, therefore the Lord intervened.

We all know the history of Numbers 22-24 were the Lord forbade Balaam to approach Balak and Balaam still went ahead and how the Lord compelled him to, in the presence of Balak, every time bless the children of Israel.

Earlier the Lord reminded them about this event.

- In Deuteronomy 23 we read that the Lord forbade certain nations to partake in worshipping services.
- Then the Lord refers to this event when Balak wanted to imprecate Israel with the help of Balaam and how He (the Lord) then intervened:

Nevertheless the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you.
(Deuteronomy 23:5)

These last words are the crux of the matter: **because the Lord your God loves you.**

This is also what the court case is dealing with: the Lord loves those belonging to Him,

- Therefore He constantly reminds them about His love for them.
- The aim of His court case against His people is not to acquire a judgement of guilt and punishment.
- It is aimed at repairing the bond of love between Him and His people.

Again the Lord takes them back to their history: Do they remember what took place from Shittim to Gilgal?

- The Balak-Balaam event took place whilst they were at Shittim.
- At Gilgal they crossed the river Jordan, in other words the entry into the Promised Land.

Gilgal vividly calls back into memory the wonderful mercy of the Lord because with that the Lord closed the fulfilment of His promise exactly as He started it.

- When they left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea they did so on dry land and now they entered the Promised Land on dry land by crossing the Jordan river.
- God does not hesitate performing miracles when fulfilling His promises to those that He loves.

On the other hand it also calls their sin and the Lord's reprieving thereof to memory.

- After forty years of intimate presence of the Lord to them, not one single man was circumcised.
- They thus disregarded the physical recognition of the covenant – and that whilst in the continuous presence of the Lord of the Covenant Himself.
- The Lord could have destroyed all of them, but He did not – He commanded all of them to be circumcised and thereafter they could continue.

All this should have reminded them that the Lord is a God of love.

- His love makes it possible for Him to forgive serious sin and make it perceptible in the lives of people.
- He only expects that we give recognition to it.
- Our worshipping of Him must mirror our gratitude and love towards Him.

After the Lord's loving charge against His people they had a change of mind.

- This is right, as every person has to do self-examination should matters start running awry in life.
- On its turn this self-examination must lead to conversion and changing of whatever is wrong.
- You only have to change the things that are not right so that you may live your life to the satisfaction of the Lord.

This is the meaning of the question:

With what shall I come before the Lord, And bow myself before the High God?

What must I do in order of having the Lord's charge against me removed? This self-examination has various phases:

- Firstly is the acknowledgement of who the Lord is. A confession is contained in the words "High God"
 - God is not without power and cannot be rejected.

- He is not subjected to human whims.
- He is so high that He is not our equal – we are just not on the same level as he is. He is the eternal Creator supporting everything and everybody by His omnipotence.
- Then the sinner starts considering his external conduct.
 - Should you want to determine your relationship with the Lord, this is the wrong place to start.
 - You must start at your heart and deepest conviction.

Can I, through my offerings, meet the Lord? In our language: church attendance and church contributions.

- As we do not always attend church services because we love God, the way this question is put causes us to immediately realise that it is a poor presentation.
- Our church contributions (offers) are also not always meant to be a reflection of our gratitude to the Lord for loving us and often changing a curse over us into a blessing.
- *This option, because the planned reconciliation with God did not start in our heart, is thus needless.*

The second attempt of self-examination leads the investigator to wonder whether he should increase his contributions.

- Possibly the Lord would be pleased should he give lots of money to the church – thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil.
- Maybe the amounts would impress the Lord.
- *Because the Lord cannot be bought, this option is also futile.*

Once again the starting point is incorrect. In the Lord's court case the crux of the matter was that the internal spiritual relationship with Him had been disrupted. To now bother with the exterior cannot contribute much towards reconciliation.

The third attack on self-examination is the closest of all.

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (Micah 6:7)

This is the essence of the matter.

- Our attention to matters favoured by the devil is so strong that we cannot always distinguish between idolatry and true worship of God.
- The offer referred to, that these people wanted to bring in aid of changing the Lord's judgement, is a child-offer – Service to Molech.

Service to Molech is the forerunner of modern Satanism. In the times the prophet Micah wrote about these things, king Ahaz offered his son.

The Lord reveals the needlessness the believers fall into when their relationship with the Lord wanes.

- They even come with heathen offers – abhorred by the Lord – in aid of gaining His favour, to the throne of the Lord.
- This shows that believers could reach a point where they no longer know and understand the Lord, thinking that they are in fact worshipping Him truly and properly.

What we, in fact, must do is looking at and knowing the mercy of the Lord and worshipping Him through it.

- In Micah 6:5 the Lord clearly reveals why He wants us to think about everything He, through the years, blessed us with.
- It is **“That you may know the righteousness of the Lord.”** (Micah 6:5) We must have knowledge of the work of the Lord so that we may know Him.

After the reflection of the sinner the Lord supplies the proper judgement:

He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

In His verdict the Lord calls onto the knowledge we must have about Him: He has shown you, O man, what is good!

- He does not accept any excuses.
- We must know because we live every day whilst His counsel is fulfilled in our lives.
- We thus see the mercy of the Lord and experience it to our bodies and lives.

Therefore the Lord demands three matters:

- He asks us to do justice
- To render love and faithfulness
- And to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8: **And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?**)

This deals with it that the offer from your own heart is the matter important to the Lord.

- It deals with whether we are able to see and understand the revelation from God.
- It deals with whether, due to the revelation from God, a personal and living relationship between Him and us will come to be.

The lord calls us: **My Children.**

- Is He **my/our God?**
- Does His love live within us?

We must love Him in such a way that we do not arrive at Him with only the fobbed off portions of our lives.

- Our love for Him must be so great that we strive to, as well as we can, comply with every commandment.
- This love should also be visible in the way we deal with other people.
- Our honesty towards the Lord and our neighbour must always be beyond reproach.

We must not fall into conceitedness. The Bible contains many examples of what conceitedness does to mankind.

- In his own eyes the conceited person immediately becomes his own god.
- He makes his own laws and regulations and puts himself above the will of God.
- Eventually his worship becomes exhausted and him and his descendants become devoid of church and religion.

Let us return to the start of this sermon. The Lord laid a charge.

- From both the charge as well as the following judgement it is clear that, to satisfy the justice of the Lord, a heavy punishment will have to be imposed and complied with.
- It is just as clear that something superhuman will have to happen to rehabilitate us in again understanding and executing the justice of the Lord.

Somebody will have to lead us back and teach us the love and faithfulness of the Lord so that we may render it to Him and our neighbour.

- We will have to be brought to conversion in order that we again may live humbly (considerately) facing God. (Micah 6:8 **And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?**)

The Lord has, by doing precisely what we cannot do, already engineered these matters.

- He brought a Godly and humanly sacrifice – our Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Lord Jesus Christ – the Son of God – had to die so that all these transgressions may be forgiven, but also that we may be changed in coming back to the purpose of the creation, namely properly and correctly serving God the Lord.

With what shall I come before the Lord, And bow myself before the High God?

- With a solid faith and true love for the Lord.
- I go with a search for His will and justice.
- I bow to the Lord and confess Him as the High God – the highest Triune God whom in his omnipotence is my God, Father and Redeemer.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 46:1

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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