

Standing, we singⁱ: Psalm 7:6 beforehand

Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earthⁱⁱ. Beloved, grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christⁱⁱⁱ. By the powerful operation of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Psalm of praise: 31:1,2

Confession of faith: **Nicene Creed**

I 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 worlds; 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 us men and 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 quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, 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 I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

After the law, we pray for the forgiveness of our sins with Psalm 25:9

Law

¹*And God spake all these words, saying,*

²*I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

³*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

⁴*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.*

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;*

⁶*And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*

⁷*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

⁸*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

⁹*Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:*

¹⁰*But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:*

¹¹*For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

¹²*Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*

¹³*Thou shalt not kill.*

¹⁴*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

¹⁵*Thou shalt not steal.*

¹⁶*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

¹⁷*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.*

Exodus 20:1-17 KJV

Psalm 25:9

Prayer

- **Doxology:**
- **Worship:**
- **Confession:**
- **Supplication** (for pardon of sins):
- **Thanksgiving:**
- **Intercession**
(for the need of the congregation, the church, authorities, sinful world and appeal to the promises of God)
- **General supplication:**
- **Illumination of the Holy Spirit** (necessary for the ministry of the Word):

Psalm 22:1

Scripture reading: Matthew 24

Text: Matthew 24: 12, 13

¹²And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. ¹³But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (Matthew 24:12,13 KJV)

We will all still suffer greatly for the sake of the Name of Jesus Christ. And a great process of sifting will also still take place in the church.

- All the sorrow that the church will suffer in the last days will cause those who are not prepared to believe and to endure the stress of that time, to join the ranks of those who hate the church, for the sake of their own comfort.
- And all of this will come to pass because of lovelessness!

How did it happen that the Lord preached this sermon?

- He had just told the disciples that the day would come when Jerusalem would be levelled with the ground.
- This announcement, which seemed to the disciples to come from nowhere, really shook them.

It was as if they had personally seen into this devastation.

- All at once they realised that there would be much pain and sorrow in the time before the Second Coming.
- But they were mistaken in thinking that it would come on the very last day of Jerusalem's destruction.

Then Jesus starts with this sermon of the sorrows.

- It will not be as simple as the temple and the city only being levelled
- There will be a great struggle, both before and after
- The time just before Jesus' coming will become intolerable

At once the disciples were worried.

- To such an extent that they immediately wanted to know when these things would happen
- But now the thing is this: if they were already concerned, how much more should this worry us!

The Lord Jesus assured them that they needn't be concerned with the time, but that they should rather be concerned with themselves!

- Those times, will be times of lovelessness
- Just think of how hard it will be for us, as each one of us is dependant on love

Verses 5 & 6 contain urgency: Beware! We will be misled.

- The first distinguishing mark of this time will be the variety of many different faiths
- And many will appeal to the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ
- Which is where the hate and lovelessness starts – we all know how violent hate becomes where matters of faith are concerned. Our church was born from such a struggle.
- In various parts of the world many people already endure torture for the sake of this precious faith.

The hate extends further

- Peoples stand up against each other

- Civil wars and terror are seen on the news on a daily basis
- After all, this is what it means when the Lord says:
And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6 NKJV)

These things do not happen very far from us. The Lord brings it very close to us, because just thereafter the following is expressly stated: **see that you be not troubled: ...** (Matthew 24:6 KJV)

Why must we watch out and be strong?

- Because these sorrows are still not the end. All these terrible things must happen, but still, it is not the end. These are the things that will happen when the end starts its course (conclusion). Which is what verse 6 says.

With the lovelessness of mankind comes the lovelessness of Satan.

- This combination will result in famines and pestilences
- Death will become commonplace. Which according to verse 8, is but the beginning

Then it comes even closer. It then spreads to the Lord's church – and to all peoples.

- Over time we will be given over to oppression
- Believers will be put to death
- Because of our faith, all the nations will hate those of us who confess the Lord Jesus as God and Saviour.

But think again of the first part of verse 9 and of verse 10. Who will be the ones who will deliver and oppress us? Here enters the lovelessness!

- It is written: **betray one another and hate one another**
- It is not strangers who will do these hateful things to us

Mark 13 treats the same passage. There these loveless people are described as follows (verse 12):

¹²Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

What a situation!

- You or I could be one of those who delivers his child to be killed due to his faith!
- Or the children amongst us: you could be one of those who has your parents put to death due to your unbelief

It will become that bad.

- It will no longer be a case of war and death on the battlefields
- In their very homes, people will attack each other and betray and kill each other because of faith
- Think of how fierce it gets when your children are lost to all sorts of strange religions
- Which is where lovelessness leads

Everyone who has one or another association with a church and faith will be hated by everyone else.

- It can be summarised with the following words: suffering, grief, tears!
- This is what awaits us during the last days

We do not know when these things will be at its worst. Which is why those of us who are in the church, must do two things:

- First off we must ensure that our love for each other does not turn cold
- Secondly we must endure this suffering for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ

How do we prevent our love from turning cold?

- There is a serious responsibility on us, but practically the way it works is that we must love God with all our heart, all our soul and all our strength.
- Together with this, we must love our neighbour as ourselves

It's actually logical, because your love for God will cause you to not lose your faith in such times.

- You will always retain your love for God and His church.
- Then we will not go about besmirching fellow congregants
- We will view all people as they stand in their relationship to God

We must rather look to ourselves. What would I answer God if He asks me why I want to be in heaven?

- My only answer can be: Lord I love you, which is why I stand before you in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ!
- Then we will also experience the warmth of God's love when he envelops us with His holiness

Annexed to that is neighbourly love

- If someone sins go speak with him in love
- Pray for him even if he does not desire repentance
- Do not allow your love for him to turn cold; even his love for you cools down!
- Do not cause him the suffering that he causes you, because if you do, then you are on the wrong side of the fence when the End of Time comes

Furthermore: Carry your burden of suffering for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake

- These things will come to pass
- We do already experience these things to some degree, yet this is but a mild beginning of what is to come

We must be grateful that we may suffer for Jesus Christ's sake, because there are many who do not suffer, exactly because of their hate of Christ. They are also not heirs to eternal life.

There must be a particular style to our lives. We must suffer in accordance with the manner in which Jesus Christ handled His suffering.

- On the day that He was born, he did not turn around and go back to heaven because animals instead of adoring people welcomed His birth!
- He also did not command the angels to exterminate the Pharisees because they ridiculed and derided Him.
- He did not extinguish them with His divine power when they tried to bring Him to a fall with their puzzles and false problems

He retained His Divine dignity, because He wished to suffer for the sake of God's honour, and unto redemption of the elect.

- But we cannot redeem anyone by our suffering, as we cannot even redeem ourselves by our suffering
- But it is possible for Christ's honour to be visible from our suffering
- We can see how Satan uses our neighbour to wound us in our faith – or when we become dishonest, we see how the devil uses us to wound our neighbour.

Now the Lord Jesus Christ is no longer here

- But He sent us His Spirit
- The Holy Spirit teaches us and leads to truth
- This truth is also to keep to the things which Christ taught us
- Thus also love

The passage says that there will be a falling away in the love of people. This love runs cold

- We lose our love for people when we are not mindful to exercise the Lord's love
- Just look at our congregation. Most of us are quite neutral towards each other. Most don't even know each other.
- If that is so, then we can surely expect to be cheerful partakers in the afflictions of the End Times – because how can you care for someone, or reach out to them, if you do not even know who he is.

The first signs of the cooling down of love is that unrighteousness increases

- Anger and hate of each other, and especially deceit increases, especially outside of the Lord's church, but the church is also not immune to these ills

Let us increase our love

- In the first instance love of God and His church
- Then love of one another – without reservation!

Because this love is joined to the sure knowledge that I carry my sorrows in Christ's honour

- This love is also joined to a steadfast faith
- Which means that I know that I am always with the Lord – in this life and the next

Amen

Closing prayer

Closing Psalm: 73:10

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all^{iv}.

Amen.

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ⁱ <http://www.genevanpsalter.com/music-a-lyrics>

ⁱⁱ Psalm 124:8

ⁱⁱⁱ 1 Corinthians 1:3

^{iv} 2 Corinthians 13:14