

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 9 AUGUST 2009: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 35:4

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 86:3,8

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 1:1

Law

Psalm: 1:1

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 18:16

Scripture reading: Matthew 5

Scripture text: Matthew 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3)

With this pronouncement of blessing, the Lord Jesus Christ reveals that not only the coming of the Kingdom of God is eminent, but that it has already partially arrived, and as such is present in His work.

- He also reveals that He already recognises those who will be in His Kingdom – there are certain characteristics identifying them.

One has to understand these pronouncements of blessing properly though.

- These pronouncements of blessing do not set an ideal that we have to strive towards.
- For example it is not stated that you have to strive towards poverty of spirit in order to inherit the Kingdom of Heavens – it is not a moral ideal you have to pursue to be saved.

With this pronouncement of blessing the Lord reveals how big His power and mercy is. He indicates to whom He, in redemptive mercy, renders His love.

- Firstly He goes to the miserable.
- But He also includes a specific type of misery: people who are poor in spirit.

In the kingdom of God these people will experience salvation.

- Reward/payment is not referred to.
- There is a big difference between reward and redemption – here redemption is the subject referred to.
- The mercy of God especially is shown in the fact that redemption is not in reach of these mentioned people.
- Those who are caught up in darkness receive redemption.

Let us consider the meaning of the word *blessed*:

- *Blessed* is the extreme form of salvation.
- It points to the joy and peace where God embraces you in His majesty.
- It also shows the place where this will happen, namely the eternal dwelling of God.

The words *blessed are the poor in spirit* actually creates a big contrast as the word used for poor in fact means beggar.

- It is a person without possessions and expectations.
- He has nothing and cannot attain anything.

The poor in spirit are thus the people possessing nothing spiritually. Luke just calls them the poor.

- Here the Bible is describing people who are spiritually wanting: they are unable to live without committing sin.
- Spiritually they are powerless and without abilities.
- They are the poorest in the depth of humankind.
- And they are aware of it.

Here the Lord is referring to us.

- Can you and I see ourselves in these words?
- On our own we do not have any spiritual future.
- We are unable to free ourselves from the devil and death – we are poor in spirit.

The incomprehensibility of God's mercy is that it is to those that the Lord says that they will attain complete redemption and salvation when they receive the kingdom of heaven.

Here Psalm 34:18 fits in:

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves those who have a contrite spirit.

Or as is written in Isaiah 66:2:

For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist," Says the Lord."But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word. (Isaiah 66:2)

This is how the people, to whom Jesus says that the kingdom of the heavens belong to, look like.

- How it will happen that we receive the kingdom of heaven is not written here.
- But this is not necessary because we know that it will happen by the virtues and effects of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - On the cross He became poor in misery.
 - So badly that at a stage He called out that God had forsaken Him.

Jesus, in fact, was thus poor in spirit during His dying moments.

- Humanly all His power left Him.
- In deep dependency He gave up His Spirit to the hands of His Father.
- There He bore God's punishment and anger of our sins.

Through this suffering He acquired for us the privilege of salvation and redemption and eternal life.

- By this He supplied us a dwelling in the kingdom of God where diseases and misery made way to eternal life and the richness of God's glory.
- By this He gave us a dwelling where abusive language made way to heavenly choirs singing night and day to the glory of God.

On the day of the crucifixion two robbers hung next to the Lord.

- Even during his last moments one of the robbers was rebellious.
 - He had no realisation of his spiritual poverty.
 - He even hated Jesus for not freeing them from the cross.
 - Unconvinced of his sin he died the death of everlasting doom.
- The other one died with the deep realisation of his weakness and lack of power.
 - He also admitted that he was executed due to his sin.

- Suddenly he had a future – the Lord told him that on that day, together with Him, he would be in paradise.

This pronouncement of blessing thus teaches us:

- We must experience our poverty.
- We must realise that we are completely lost.
- We must realise that we are not strong.
- The realisation of our sins must cause us to be kind of lonely – just as poverty makes the beggar lonely.
- We must pray for the redemption and mercy of the Lord.

Then we will understand the richness when God, in His mercy, rewards us with eternal life.

Brothers and sisters, how do you experience your spiritual life?

- Do you also experience your lostness?
- Are you often heavily driven by the realisation of your sins?
- Does your conscience also often drive you about matters from your past?

You must know that it is to such people that the Lord said:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: Scripture Versification 10-: 3 [Matthew 6 :9 -13]

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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 9 August 2009
 Scripture Modern King James Version