

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2008: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 144:1

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 33:1

Confession of faith: Apostolic

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy catholic* Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting

Amen.

After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 103:9

Law

Psalm: 103:9

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 31:1,5,12

Scripture reading: Numbers 20

Scripture text: Numbers 20:8

"Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals."(Numbers 20:8)

For a moment the people of Israel thought that they were in a dead end street. They had doubts about the intentions of the Lord towards them.

- They were so crestfallen that they even did not say that they wish they were still in Egypt – the old story they always gave Moses.
- No. They say they wish that they were like their already deceased brethren.

In some way we can understand this.

- This occurrence took place at the end of their wandering for many years in the desert.
- They have been wandering in the desert for forty years experiencing hardship and having troubles with the Lord because they became impatient with Him every time He punished them because of their disobedience and rebelliousness.

Now again they are without water. To top it all they are also still in mourning Miriam, recently deceased and buried, who played a big role amongst them.

- Whilst they are in mourning a beloved taken from them, they have to observe their animals suffering from thirst.
- Whilst the farmers amongst them are also very thirsty they strongly join in complaining: **"And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink."** (Numbers 20:5)

Just after this event the Bible tells us about the advance to Canaan. In other words, the older people still remembering the times in Egypt are all deceased.

- The people complaining here are youngsters who grew up in the desert.
- They are thus people who grew up under the hand of the Lord and should have known that it is better to pray requesting from God, instead of immediately reproaching.

Moses and Aaron went to the entrance of the tabernacle of meeting – this was their church building.

- We do not read about them praying, they just fell on their faces to the ground.
- Immediately God listens to them. Immediately He loves them.

We would expect the Lord to unleash His wrath over them.

- But the Lord is good to them.
- He tells Moses and Aaron how they must supply water to the people.

With this the Lord is showing us His mercy. Many times he wanted to destroy the people of Israel, but every time Moses prayed the Lord relented and forgave them.

- This teaches us that the Lord renders loving-kindness to us also and that because Christ is praying to God for it, He also forgives us our sins. He is our Intercessor.
- Consider Romans 8:34.
Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. (Romans 8:34)

Indeed the Lord Jesus is doing intercessory prayer for us, not only did He die for us. In the desert Moses is the intercessor between the people of Israel and God.

- Heavy demands were there put to him.
- As intercessor he was put to the test.

At Meribah he was angry with the people of Israel and that caused him to commit a big transgression.

- As far as Israel was concerned, this event at Meribah was only one of many,
- but for Moses and Aaron this held dire meaning.

The Lord gave His instructions:

- He commanded Moses to take the rod.
- Afterwards he had to assemble the people at the rock.
- Then, with the people as witnesses, he had to speak to the rock.

Then – as said by the Lord – He will supply water.

After assembling the people at the rock, Moses held a speech to them.

And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" (Numbers 20:10)

Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod.

- Moses did exactly what the Lord did **not** tell him to do.
- He spoke to the people and not to the rock, and then he hit the rock – of this the Lord told him nothing at all.

The Lord regarded this as a serious transgression.

- Due to this sin Moses was not allowed to lead the people into the land given to them by the Lord.
- What a heavy punishment! After all the years of toil and battle Moses may not see the fruits of his work.

Because of his sin the Lord revoked his work of intercession from him.

- Was this sin of Moses so serious?
- He damaged the sanctity of God.
- The Lord clearly says that Moses and Aaron did not believe in Him to sanctify His Name to the people.

It was not his faith letting him bring water from the rock; he did it by himself.

- Also he asked the people "must **we** bring water for you out of this rock?"
- Deuteronomy 32:51 teaches that the sin of Moses' rebelliousness was against the will of the Lord.
- The people were rebellious as Moses said, but the Lord did not tell him to say it.
- In his conceitedness Moses put himself against the Lord.

In fact the people were rebellious – as Moses said

- But God did not instruct Moses to speak to the people or reproach them about it.

The Lord wants us to know exactly what type of future this kind of sin holds.

- Such a type of man will not enter the Promised Land.
- Applied practically to us, we could say that he would not enter heaven.
- The people, who all were sinners, may enter.

The reason being that although they were rebellious they did not, like Moses, try to put themselves in the position of God.

Built into this passage of history is a very stern warning:

- God has no time for conceited people.
- Especially those who are so conceited that in their own eyes they become God.

The shortcomings of Moses call for an intercessor able to face God, free of sin.

- History teaches us that we are too full of sin and rebelliousness to be able to live facing the Lord.
- But He loves us and wants to grant us mercy.
- Therefore He sent the Lord Jesus Christ to free us from death, just as he sent Moses to save Israel before they died of thirst.

But with the difference that Jesus Christ is doing exactly what God sent Him to do, unlike Moses who could not accomplish it.

- Our intercessor died for us. For every one of us – for you and for me – He passed through death.
- But the fact that he is dead, on its own, does not mean much – we all have to die.
- BUT we do not pass through death like Him! He entered death carrying all our guilt of sin for which, facing the Lord's throne of judgement, He had to atone!
- The importance of His work is in that He was able to close His death by rising out of it - He carried all the punishment of the Lord and achieved acquittal for us, so that we may live facing God!
- For every one of us He arose from death so that we, who believe in Him, may live!

Consider how the matter was for the Lord Jesus: He hangs on the cross – through the cause of His people!

- But he makes no claim on His person and on His Godliness!
- He also does not speak about them doing Him injustice.
- He does not reproach.
- He prays for the wicked (we are included!):
Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."
 (Luke 23:34)

This did not mean that the punishment was absent. Of course not, because God punishes sin.

Sometimes we are like the children of Israel.

- An affliction comes over us and immediately we doubt.
- Or even worse, we become rebellious and reproach God.
- All sorts of questions arise within us.
 - Why should this have happened to me?
 - I try so hard to be virtuous.

Conceitedness is something found in all people.

- With some people it is just in a lesser degree than with others.
- Basically it revolves around own-importance.

Conceitedness has many faces – some even appears to be harmless. We know it under the following guises:

- Somebody is angry, because in his importance he was overlooked;
- Somebody claims that he will get even (revenge);

- Some people are extremely presumptuous – only their will and opinion counts;
- The moment somebody dares to go against you, your temper flares up.

This conduct is not only limited to our daily lives. It is a lifestyle that also has an effect on our life of faith.

- Let us be honest: Is sin anything else than openly differing with the Lord?
- We reject God's viewpoint and requirements regarding a matter and go ahead doing our own thing!
- Sin is an open confirmation that we differ with God.

Take note how this manifests in our prayers:

- We pray for the forgiving of our sins, but we pray beating around the bush. We do not want to call the sin by its name.
- We do not pray openly to the Lord for the forgiving of our feelings of hatred.
- Or that we need His help in overcoming dishonesty.
- About our rebelliousness against God for the things, happening against our will to us in life, we confess very little.

Often it is as though a veil of dishonesty is hanging over our relationship with God.

- Should we closely look at this, then our shame facing the Lord is false – as we do not want to admit and confess to God our mistakes, our conceitedness is apparent here as well.
- In facing God I am unable to protect myself by deceiving Him.

Forgiveness of sin is easily possible should we only be honest in our relationship with God: in other words

- honestly confessing our sin,
- and honestly begging for forgiveness!
- If this honesty towards the Lord flows through to an honest life with our fellow humans.

From us the Lord Jesus demands that we follow Him in humbleness.

- He teaches that those who are the least will be the biggest in the Kingdom of God.
- He teaches us to pray in sincerity and not to avoid God through dishonesty in prayer.
- He teaches us to be honest to God and ourselves.

Let us thus be as the Word is teaching us to be.

- Let us exchange all conceitedness for true humbleness.
- Pride and conceitedness does not go together with honesty. Humbleness is to honour God for what you are and trusting Him for all that we need in this life.
- Humbleness is doing only what God asks and not to elevate ourselves with all sorts of wiseacres above His Will.

Because God is with us problems cannot overtake us.

- Through the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, God gave us the assurance that the victory against sin is our victory as if it was like we ourselves bore God's punishment.

When Moses, as intercessor, hit the rock they received water to quench their thirst.

- If Moses, as a human with so many shortcomings, meant so much and was able to fulfil the needs of the people, how much more does Christ, our God not mean to you?

When sin and doubt and rebelliousness overtake us, be aware that the Lord Jesus Christ died for us. Know that there is salvation for us.

- The Lord Jesus Christ is the Rock from which we drink when we spiritually thirst.
- 1 Corinthians 10:4 teaches that everybody ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink because they drank from a following spiritual Rock, and that Rock was Jesus.

In life we must take courage because the Lord Jesus Christ strengthens and assures us that He is the Rock from which we may drink when experiencing anxiety.

When we become crestfallen we must not, like Israel, wish that we are those already dead. No, live like a delivered with a song in the heart, because for you, salvation has arrived.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Heavenly Father, hear us when we, in deep respect, approach Your throne. We thank You for the privilege that, with a strengthened faith, we may close the activities of the weekend.

Amen.

Closing Psalm: 34:1,4

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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