

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE – SUNDAY 29 JANUARY 2012 – MORNING SERVICE.

Sing beforehand: Psalm 73:1+12.

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

Amen.

Song of praise: Psalm 149:1+2

Confession of faith: Apostles Creed

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 Ghost, 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 thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead: I believe in the Holy Ghost: I believe in the holy catholic church: the communion of saints: The forgiveness of sins: The resurrection of the body: And the life everlasting. Amen.

After the law we sing of God's love and forgiveness of our sins with Psalm 119:1+2.

Law

Psalm 119:1+2.

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):*

Amen.

Psalm 1:1+2+4.

Scripture reading: Psalm 1:1-6

Text: Psalm 1:6: For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, ...

Theme: The LORD walks with the righteous hand in hand.

Welcome in the LORD's catechism, beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, what we read this morning is the LORD's lesson for His children. In this lesson the LORD teaches us the right choice for our life. Each one of us, whether we be children or adults, are confronted by choices each day. You must choose whether you will take this road or that road.

Sometimes the choice is easy, because the LORD has enabled you by the teaching that He gave you in Bible studies, public worship and discussions about faith. With this equipment you have, you are able to choose right at the beginning which of the two or more roads the LORD wants you to

take. A simple example – a friend asks you to shoot and kill someone. You immediately know that is not the road the Lord wants you to take.

At other times, probably most of the time, the choice you must make is not that easy. The one road looks so nice and it fits in so well with your nature. The other also is promising but you are uncertain whether you can wait so long for these promises to come true. Of such a difficult choice the Holy Spirit Himself gives us an example. Jacob and his mother, Rebekah, knew that the LORD had chosen Jacob to be the head of the covenant. But, instead of waiting for the LORD to fulfil His promise, and because they were afraid that Esau would receive the firstborn's blessing, he and his mother chose to deceive his father Isaac so that he might be the head of the covenant.

However difficult or easy the choice might be, in this catechism the LORD teaches us now by means of simple images and clear words what the right choice is and why we must make this choice. The LORD teaches us this by showing us the difference between the way of life, the possibilities of life and the end of the life of the righteous and of the unbeliever.

The way of life is the road you will choose, the manner of living that you will choose. **Blessed is the man who chooses not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly nor to stand in the path of sinners, nor to sit in the seat of the scornful.** This is the way of life of the unbeliever. Hear what they are called – they are ungodly. They live away from the LORD because they want to be without God and without His Law. They want to be godless, because they do not want someone to be their master and they don't want laws because laws, they say, make them feel shut in.

They are sinners. They endeavour to go against the law and against the will of the LORD. Because they want to live without God and His Law, their own whims and fancies are their law. They do as they like. Whether it is good or bad does not matter, as long as they can benefit by it, it is good enough. Furthermore they are scoffers. They scoff at the believers. They laugh at people who would rather live subject to the LORD'S rule than be master of their own life. Eventually they scorn the Bible and the LORD. Even the Holy Name of our LORD becomes in their mouths a word to curse and abuse with.

The LORD now points out to us the danger of this way of life, beloved. One does not become a follower of Satan overnight. The devil is too clever and shrewd for that. He knows that he cannot at once turn a true believer into an atheist. He will try to turn you slowly and imperceptibly, so that you do not realize it happening. First he entices you to follow the **counsel of the ungodly**. And when you have chosen to follow the counsel of the ungodly and are comfortable with it, it becomes easier to **stand in the path of the sinners**. You now feel at home and do not see anything wrong in **sitting in the seat of the scornful**.

But note carefully how this way of life runs. Slowly but surely it goes down more and more. First walk in the counsel of the ungodly, then stand in the path of the sinners and eventually you sit in the seat of the scornful.

Blessed is the man who chooses not to live this way. Blessed means that this person finds joy and happiness in a place different from that where the ungodly sinners and scoffers find their happiness. Or rather, the true believer finds his or her joy and happiness not in a place but in a Person, in the LORD. The true believer finds **his delight in the Law of the LORD**. One immediately wants to ask: "But how can there be joy and happiness and delight in the Law of the LORD?"

Brothers, sisters and children, by the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit we are able to comprehend in faith the purpose of the LORD's Law. The LORD never gave the Law to take from us all the good things in life. When God told Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of

good and evil, He in love set a limit for them. Because He wants mankind to have eternal life, He said: Do not eat of that tree. When the LORD tells us: Do not gossip and spread lies He does not deny us all the juicy tales about other people out of spite. He says this to protect us. The LORD's Law therefore is a boundary set in love within which the LORD wants us to live. And within this boundary we may live fully and abundantly and know that we please the LORD. That is why the true believer finds his delight in the law of the LORD. From it we learn how to satisfy the LORD and to make Him happy for having made us His children.

Because the true believer by the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit comprehends the purpose of the Law, he or she **meditates on it day and night**. To meditate on the Lord's law does not mean to worry or to ponder about it. When one meditates on the Lord's law one strives to understand how one can apply to one's life that which the Lord is saying. One prays to the Lord and meditates so that one can make His law the practise of one's life. And that occurs not now and then but every day and night, constantly.

A true believer meditates on the the LORD's Law day and night, because he wants to do what is written in Psalm 119:1. He wants **to walk in the law of the LORD**. Such a person wants to live within the boundaries of God's love. Hence he lets the law of the LORD determine all his words, deeds and thoughts. And the more this happens the greater becomes the happiness and joy, because you become more certain that you satisfy your Heavenly Father. You are doing what He expects of you.

What are the possibilities of life that the true believer has? The ungodly sinner and scoffer thinks that the true believer is restricted by the law of God and therefore does not have many possibilities in life. But, see what the Lord says, beloved. The righteous **shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water**. The life of the true believer is steadfast. And the possibilities of life are unlimited, because he is steadfast, not in own strength, but by the rivers of water. He continually receives enough of the right nourishment so that he may continue to grow.

Some of this we see in the Great Karoo. The veldt is drab and dry but, there where the Lord has planted his trees, they stand green and in flower. The Lord planted them by streams of water invisible to the human eye. That is what the Holy Spirit does with God's children. He plants them into Christ, the Rock and the Fountain of living water. Out of Christ the Holy Spirit gives by faith to the believer forgiveness of sin, new life, a life without end, for it is the eternal life.

Brothers, sisters and children, this is the miraculous of a tree. The deeper its roots go into the soil seeking water, the greater its head of leaves. The tighter the believer grows into Christ and the more Christ controls the life of the believer, the clearer it becomes that this person is a chosen son or daughter of the Lord God. A tree of which the roots grow deeper and deeper following the streams of water, gives its fruit constantly at the right time. A believer who, by the Holy Spirit and the Word of the Lord grows deeper and deeper into Christ cannot do else but to produce the fruits of praise and thanks to God. These fruits are in all you do and say and think in your service to God and other people. Because you are in Christ you want to make the image of Christ in your life more visible to other people in all that you do and say.

As the tree, with its shade and the coolness of the leaves, attracts many animals to rest there from the hot sun, so the believer who is planted in Christ attracts people of all kinds to the Lord. Even difficult circumstances do not affect the possibilities of life of the believer. The LORD says the **tree's leaves do not wither**. Even in times of drought there is a thick head of leaves and fruit in its season. That is not so because the tree is so big and strong but because it is planted by the rivers of water. Conditions of life also do not diminish the possibilities of life of the believer. His and her faith

and the fruits of faith are not determined by circumstances, but by the Rock and the Fountain of living water, namely, Christ who always remains faithful.

And whatever the righteous starts and **does shall prosper**. Beloved, now we must listen carefully. The true believer cannot believe and say: “because I serve the Lord, therefore I must and shall live prosperously. Because I serve the Lord therefore I shall have the best motor car and the largest house and the highest bank balance”. It is not about the kind of prosperity that we as people hold to be prosperity. It is about the prosperity of the Lord and the Lord’s kingdom. True prosperity is the result God’s work in the life of the one who seeks the will of God.

The possibilities of life of the righteous are endless and prosperous because he delves into the Word of the Lord and he submits himself to the rule of his King, Jesus Christ. The believer who zealously seeks to do the will of the Lord in everything and who, before he undertakes something, first seeks the will of the Lord and follows it, cannot be else than prosperous. It will succeed because the Lord walks hand in hand with the righteous. The Lord lets His own work succeed. And the joy of the true believer herein is that of a full life in which he knows that he glorifies his Heavenly Father and satisfies Him.

The possibilities of life for the ungodly are different, for he **is like the chaff which the wind drives away**. In his life there never is any steadfastness. He is blown away by the slightest breeze. Such a person never finds rest. He goes from the one to the other seeking advice for his life. He tries every cure and every medicine on the market to give him joy of life and strength. He wants to drink from every stream and thinks that thereby he will gain immortality. And the result is that he never bears fruit and has not even an attractive life. He is like chaff. Chaff is dead and useless. It is burnt and discarded. When the Lord tells us what the possibilities of life of the ungodly are, He is short and sweet. The ungodly has no possibilities of life, for **he is like the chaff which the wind drives away**.

As fruitless and drab as the possibilities of life of the ungodly is, so tragic is the end of such person’s life. In this life already the sinners cannot stand in the circle of the righteous. The people who have chosen to lead an ungodly life will not feel comfortable with the faithful. He will feel shut out because they speak of things and experience things of which he knows nothing because from the start he did not want to know of them. In these words we also hear how the Lord speaks of the hypocrites.

A hypocrite is someone who appears to be part of the congregation and the community of saints. But because such a person only pretends to be at home in the church it will eventually become apparent that he is not really at home. It becomes apparent in his fruitless life. Such a person attends public worship but he never shares his gifts with his fellow-man because his gifts have never developed fully. They have never developed because he is not really serious about the Lord’s law.

The Lord says that finally the end of the ungodly’s life is total destruction. **The way of the ungodly shall perish**. He will be forgotten. When our King Jesus Christ returns as Judge on the clouds from heaven, He comes to judge the living and the dead. And the ungodly will never stand in that judgement. On that day the Lord will recall the fruitless lives of those people. Because they were disobedient and wanted to lead a God-less life, the Lord gives them what they sought. An eternal existence without the love and grace of God, an end of life that perishes into nothing. For an existence without God is not life but only a continuous perishing.

The Lord does not now speak of the end of the righteous’ life. He only says: **“The LORD knows the way of the righteous.”** In these words we do not hear of an end of life but of an eternal life. The Lord did not come to know the path of the righteous or will come to know it, no, He knows it now and unto eternity. And when the LORD says that He knows the path of the righteous, He says that He is personally involved with it. He walks hand in hand with the true believer on his path of life unto

eternity. As endless as the possibilities of life are for the believer, so endless is life, because by the atoning merit of Christ it carries on unto eternity.

Brothers, sisters and children, in the coming week each of us will be confronted with some or other choice. With the equipment of this catechism the Lord sends us into the world. When the choice confronts us it now is our responsibility to choose the way of life that the Lord wants us to be on. Let us therefore meditate on the Word of the Lord, let us with the power of the Spirit hold on tightly to Jesus Christ our Guide, then we will make the right choice and glorify God and satisfy Him.

Amen.

Closing prayer

Closing song: Psalm 92:6+7.

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.

Rev Coen Vrey
Reformed Church Bellville
Date: 29 January 2012
Scripture: New King James.