

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 29 APRIL 2007: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 22:11

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 35:12

Confession of faith: Nicea

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 32:3.

Law

Psalm: 32:3

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: 69:3

Scripture: Hebrews 13

Text: Catechism Sunday 30; Hebrews 13:20+21

"May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen."

Nobody is able to believe and to remain steadfast in that belief unless the Lord vests this belief in that person and also confirms it.

- We cannot believe on behalf of each other or for each other.
- But we can pray for each other.

That is what this passage tells us.

- The author prays that the faith of the church may be strengthened.
- And the strengthening is to be done:
 - By the God of peace.
 - Through the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The faithful react to that by doing two things:

- They do good works that are pleasing to God.
- They give the glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

These matters are applicable to our celebration of Holy Communion for it is fitting that we come to the Lord's Supper in prayer to the Lord but also in prayer for one another. And of course, our lives must fit our prayers.

We consider the following:

1. **What do we believe about the sacrifice?**
2. **Where does introspection fit in with the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ?**

1. **What do we believe about the sacrifice?**

The Lord Jesus died on the cross for the salvation of all the people who believe in Him.

- These are also the people on whom the Holy Spirit was poured out.
- So that they should live prayerfully.
- And so that they serve and glorify the Lord Jesus under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- We are those people.

One of the instruments that the Lord Jesus gave us to help us remember this deed of salvation is the celebration of Holy Communion.

- He instituted it as a meal – not as a continuing sacrifice as in the Old Testament.

It is written in Hebrews 7:27-28 that the Son of God was the true High Priest and that He offered only one sacrifice and that was when He offered Himself: **"Unlike the other priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect for ever."**

Holy Communion is a reminder of this offering.

- The meal at the Lord's Supper directs our faith at our participation in Christ's offering.
- At this Supper we learn that we have received full forgiveness of all our sins by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord.
- The sacrament shows visibly that we share physically in the ministry of salvation of the Lord Jesus.

The truth is that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself at the breaking of the bread and the handing out of the cup confirms that the atonement that He died for our sins is complete.

That means:

- The Lord Jesus Christ's propitiating sacrifice was perfect.
- We do not need to make any personal contribution to obtain our salvation because His contribution was complete and sufficient.
- We need not seek any help from anybody else or anything else (and also cannot seek it there).

Hence it is the purpose of this Supper to fill us with a great and deep inner joy.

- It is also the intention that the believer who sits at the Lord's Table shall truly know the Lord Jesus.
- It is further the intention that each partaker of the Lord's Supper shall experience spiritually that he/she is incorporated in a living and eternal communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The true believer shall at the Lord's Supper experience the peace that he believes anew that nobody and nothing can separate him from God.

2. Where does introspection fit in with the Lord Jesus Christ's offering?

An important issue at Holy Communion is that it is a blessing for us if we partake of it correctly and that it is a sin if we do so wrongly.

- For people who in true faith know that they share in the covenant Holy Communion is a blessing because to them it is the visible proof that they and others share in the communion of salvation in the Lord.
- But it is not everyone who can claim communion with the Lord – that is why every partaker of the Lord's Supper must first subject himself to self-examination.
- It is not enough to examine oneself and leave it at that. One must have remorse for the bad and evil one finds in oneself.
- The knowledge we acquire of our sins should kindle an awareness that our sins are in conflict with the Holiness of God and also oppose the holiness He creates in us through the atoning death of His Son Jesus Christ.
- The Gospel promises everyone who has true remorse complete forgiveness of his sins.

These matters together should cause us to be joyful in our sanctification.

Introspection therefore is a discovery of the self with a subsequent life in which one breaks with sin.

- Introspection together with remorse and repentance generates growth in one's faith.
- Everyone who examines himself honestly sees in himself signs of death – not only in his sins but also in his own attitude towards those sins.

Every true believer bases his remorse on two matters:

- The first is that he knows that he injures God's holiness.
- The second is that he also knows that the Lord Jesus Christ does not have communion with people who do not in faith accept and serve Him.

That is why the Lord's command to the church is so explicit!

- Those who refuse to repent must be kept away from the Lord's Supper.
- Refusal of partaking of Holy Communion must bring their conscience to speak to them more forcefully so that they may break with their sins.

That is where Holy Communion has a strengthening effect.

- There are people who sin but do not persist therein – they resist it but often lose the struggle against sin.
- Holy Communion tells such people that God forgives.
- To the extent that He let His own Son be put to death to punish the sins of sinners – so that they would not be destroyed because of their sins in His judgment.
- But He demands that such people must truly and powerfully fight against sin.

The comfort we find in Holy Communion makes us arise in the power of Christ and makes us want to listen to His voice again.

- We then have a new will to live.
- At the Lord's Supper we experience the abundance and the mildness of God's love.
- And also the joy of His grace.

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ, also make us perfect in all good works. May He guide us with His Holy Spirit to do His will and that we may with all our life serve the Lord Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory for ever and ever.

[We find all this summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism the Lord's Day no. 30]

Amen

Closing prayer

Closing Hymn: 1-1:5

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen

*Dr MJ Du Plessis
Reformed Church Bellville
29 April 2007 (morning)
Scripture NIV*