

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 14 OCTOBER 2007: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 20:1+5

*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 25:1+7

**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 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 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 1:4.*

Law

Psalm: 1:4

**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: 59:10

**Scripture:** Joshua 5

**Text:** Joshua 5:14

*“So He said; 'No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come'. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped, and said to Him, 'what does my Lord say to His servant?’”*

How often do we not shrink away from life?

- There is so much to do – and so difficult to do!
- One then wants to give up.

It is the same in our faith. We often do not have the courage to follow our principles.

- Not only because we do not know what to do.
- Often because we lack the courage.
- Sometimes our faith is so weak that we do not believe that we are able to do certain things.
- We simply lack the confidence.
- We lose before we have started.

Bearing this in mind we consider the following issues around Joshua the evening before the attack.

1. **The practical situation in which the Israelites found themselves that evening.**
2. **Joshua's troubles.**
3. **Christ.**

1. **The practical situation in which the Israelites found themselves that evening**

- Israel was camped at the entrance to Canaan.
- Behind them lay the journey through the desert with all its privations – famine, thirst, battles and death.
- The great day for which they left Egypt has dawned – they are going to take possession of the Promised Land!

That evening they celebrated the Passover which was the feast of their deliverance from Egypt.

- But this deliverance was in their case not unconditional.
- The Lord demanded expressly that they were to serve Him fully.
- The other condition was that they should not follow the shorter route along the coast but take the long and difficult road through the desert.

With this the Lord had a twofold purpose.

- He wanted to reveal His almight to them.
- Each time there was a crisis and famine or thirst befell them the Lord showed them how He solved the problem.
- The Lord also wanted to teach them.
- They had to be transformed from a people of slaves to men who could think for themselves and plan.
- They had to be taught how to make war.

Now this long and arduous road lies behind them. They are standing before the land that they must take possession of.

- This problem rose like a mountain before Joshua.
- That night he wanders around restlessly and worried.
- How could he, a simple man, be able to overcome a mighty city like Jericho?

Jericho was the first stronghold of the enemy to be taken.

## 2. Joshua's troubles

It is written that Joshua was near Jericho and that a Man then appeared before him.

- Actually Joshua was still at Gilgal as appears from the previous passage.
- But in his mind he was at Jericho.

As befits a good commander Joshua was planning the attack on the stronghold.

- His scouts had already done the reconnaissance and he knew what the city and its walls and the land around it looked like. (Joshua 2)
- Now his thoughts were with Jericho and the attack so that it is written – "*when Joshua was by Jericho*".

As far as Joshua was concerned he was, from a human point of view – considering and planning the impossible.

- Israel had no allies to help them.
- In his mind Joshua could see only enemies awaiting him.
- He knew that his forces were small.
- He also knew that his army's weaponry was limited and in any event insufficient to take a walled fortress like Jericho.

While deep in thought he is suddenly confronted by a man with a drawn sword in His hand. The man is ready to fight.

You can imagine Joshua's predicament.

- He is still thinking of Jericho and now there appears this man ready to fight him.
- His first thought probably was that there are even more enemies than he had reckoned with or that he was already being attacked by another enemy he had overlooked.

In his confusion he asks the man:

- Are you for us or for our enemies?
- The answer is "*No, I am the Commander of the army of the Lord!*"

He tells Joshua – I have now come!

- I have come timeously to help you in your strategy.
- I have come timeously to tell you and to reassure you that God is with you – as He assured Moses that He would be with him.
- The Lord knows of the struggle on earth of each believer. That is why He comes personally to help them.

Joshua acknowledges the Lord's help. Hence he worships the man before him.

- Joshua relinquished the command to him.
- Practically it meant that from then on the Commander of the army of the Lord was in command of both the army of angels and the army of Israel.

Joshua asked: *"What message does my Lord have for his servant?"*

- Joshua knows his own inability and recognises the grace of the Lord – the Lord had promised to be with him. (Joshua 1:5+6)
- To Joshua it was clear why this man had come:
- The Commander of the Lord's army had come to do battle.
- That is why he stood with a drawn sword.
- The Lord had come to do battle for Joshua.

Joshua is told to take off his sandals.

- Where God is present is a holy place.
- Image the joy Joshua must have felt to be able to speak with God during this hour of crisis.
- To see in your hour of crisis the Lord suddenly with you and to hear Him say that you have no cause for concern!

More can be read into the command that Joshua must take off his sandals. He was already discouraged when the angel appeared.

- By taking off his sandals Joshua would become almost completely powerless.
- He would not be ready to fight for it was not possible for a soldier to do battle with bare feet.
- Joshua takes off his sandals to show that he puts his trust in the Lord completely.

But this does not mean that it left Joshua without any task.

- He still had to do battle.
- Still as the leader of the Israelites but subject to God's command.

From this passage it is clear that on earth the true believers are constantly involved in a holy war.

- They must live righteously and holy while the world pressurises them to do wrong and live unrighteously.
- Then they are compelled to take decisions on principle as Joshua had to do before Jericho.
- You must decide what you must do to the greater glory of the Lord.

As with Joshua the Commander of the Lord's army is with us always.

- Every time we sincerely prayed to God for strength and help He was there – and the Lord always gives help.
- But you must not expect to be able to abuse the grace of God.

Like Joshua, you must give all glory and worship to God.

- It must be your sincere belief that God is almighty and that He really does have all power – also the power to rule and to decide in your own life.
- You must trust in the Lord and surrender yourself to Him completely.
- The way in which you fight wrong must show that you put the holiness of God first.

### 3. Christ

The Man in the dark introduces Himself to Joshua as the Commander of the army of the Lord. To understand this properly we must remember the following:

- Firstly that the Name used here for the Lord is His Name of the Covenant. It is the Name of God with which He declared under oath that He would be a God for Israel and that they would be His people.
- Secondly, this Man is the Commander of the army of the Lord, He leads the host of angels.
- The New Testament teaches that there is only one Commander of the host of angels and that is Jesus Christ.
- We therefore see here a revelation in the Old Testament of Jesus Christ Himself.

When the Commander of the Lord's army appeared to Joshua He had not yet revealed His full power.

- That He did later in the same Palestine that He helped Joshua to take possession of.
- He fought the devil and all his forces in the last battle at Jerusalem.
- It was a battle which He had planned so that He could totally destroy the power of Satan and deliver all whom He saved forever from the devil's power.

We find Him the evening before in Gethsemané.

- As with Joshua, He was deeply troubled.
- Only His struggle was different from that of Joshua at Gilgal.
- That evening at Gilgal the Commander of the army of the Lord came to the aid of Joshua and took over the command from him.
- That evening in Gethsemané there was no one to come to the aid of Jesus Christ.
- He had to attack Satan's stronghold all alone and defeat him and arise from the dead without the assistance of even a single soldier of His heavenly host.

In death the struggle of the Commander of God's army was also different from that of Joshua.

- He did not fight together with God's people – He fought for them.
- His victory guaranteed that the true believers of all times would share in the inheritance of the Hereafter – as Israel received Palestine.
- The whole concept of Jesus' struggle is represented that evening before Joshua in the fact that He stood there with a drawn sword.

### 4. Application

We must remember that the grace and the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ is an element of our daily life.

- He is always present with you in joy and in trouble.
- Therefore our lives must show the holiness of our Redeemer.
- We must therefore tackle life joyfully and live joyfully – the true believer does not recoil from every problem or challenge that meets him.
- The true believer also does not give up when he is confronted with a trial.
- Believe and live your calling without doubt for you already belong to God's Victor, Jesus Christ.

**Amen**

Closing prayer

Closing Hymn: 7-1:1

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be merciful to you.

The Lord turn His countenance to you and give you peace.

**Amen**

**Dr MJ Du Plessis**  
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**14 October 2007 (morning)**  
**Scripture NIV**