

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 6 MAY 2007: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 103:3

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 68:2+9

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 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: 47:1+4

Scripture: Leviticus 26

Text: Leviticus 26:12

"I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people."

The passage we have read contains two issues.

- The first is a charge the Lord lays against His people.
- The second is a declaration of love by the Lord.
- At the same time it is a love that is compelled to bring punishment.
- The reason for it is the incomprehensible ingratitude of those who belong to the Lord.

What is the charge about?

- It is the fact that the Lord's people do not worship Him alone and wholeheartedly.
- They also worship idols.

The Lord tells them that He, the Lord Almighty is their God.

- He is the only God that exists.
- All the idols are simply imaginations of the people who create them in their thoughts.

The matter is clear:

- The Lord rebukes us because we live wrongly and worship wrongly.
- He expects of us that we shall repent and put matters right.
- He promises to reward such repentance and pure worship with numerous blessings.
- He rounds it off with a confirmation of His covenant of grace with us: He is our God and we are His people.

What the Lord tells is simple and clear:

- We must know that there is only one living God and we must worship Him alone.
- We are in our entire humanity the temple of God: **"What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: " I will live with them and walk among them and I will be their God and they will be my people." (2 Corinthians 6:16)**

What does the Lord want of us?

- He wants us to govern our life in such a manner that it is not guided by the darkness of our own mind.
- We must live with God in such a manner that our aim is directed at the eternal life with God.

In the passage in Leviticus 26 that we have read together the Lord promises His blessings in expanding circles when the people who worship Him do so correctly and obediently. In these promises we see some of the perfection of the eternal life.

- Firstly He promises His blessing in nature.
- Thereafter the Lord promises His blessing for the land.
- Thirdly the Lord promises His blessing for the people He is speaking to: **"I will put my dwelling place among you and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people." (Leviticus 26:11+12)**

Today we celebrate Holy Communion – a jubilee Supper. Let us put it differently:

- We shall sit at the Lord's Table when He will reconfirm His love and salvation to us.
- He wants us to consider afresh the meaning of the death on the cross of His Son and to understand that with it He confirms that He is our God and that we are His people – His property.

That is an important issue because every person who fails to understand this occurrence and fails to see the effect thereof in his own life and fails to believe it will be lost forever. Read what the Lord tells us further on in this chapter. Such people shall be destroyed by Him for ever.

Because we know and believe that we are not among those people who despise God the Lord and treat His demands with contempt, we must reflect on the words of the Lord: **"I will walk among you and be your God and you will be my people"**.

What does the Lord expect of us when He says this? Study of the Scripture on this issue tells us the following:

- We must obey God absolutely.
- We must take pains to establish what God said in the past and we must abide by that absolutely. Then God and His blessings will remain with us.

Jeremiah 7:23: **"But I gave them this command: 'Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you'."**

Jeremiah 11:4: **"The terms I commanded your forefathers when I brought them out of Egypt, out of the iron-smelting furnace, I said 'Obey me and do everything I command you, and you will be my people, and I will be your God'."**

It is also not a lonely road and a difficult struggle to find all these things that the Lord expects of us. He walks with us with His Godly Almighty every step of the way. He enables us to do all that He expects of us. Remember the promises made by the Lord:

Jeremiah 24:7: **"I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart."**

Jeremiah 31:33: **"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."**

Ezekiel 11:20: **"Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God."** (See also Ezekiel 14:11)

In the New Testament the Lord repeats these words:

Hebrews 8:10: **"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people."**

But we must also remember the words of Ezekiel 37:23: **"They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offences, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God."**

In this way the Lord changes us until we are with Him in the hereafter where His tabernacle shall be over us. He will be our God and we will be His people.

Ezekiel 37:27: **"My dwelling place (tabernacle) will be with them; I will be their God and they will be my people."**

It is all about reconciliation – we must be reconciled with the Lord to again become His people and to share fully in His love and grace as our only true God.

- With reconciliation there must be remorse and repentance.
- The Lord says that we must reflect on our sins and be ashamed.
- We must for shame be unable to open our mouths because He is going to reconcile Himself with us despite all we have done wrong.
- The Lord reminds us that He is our God. (Ezekiel 16:63 and Leviticus 5:18)

God has revealed to us what his absolution comprises:

- He has forgiven us the sins that He has in His tolerance left unpunished.
- He also revealed what His absolution comprises in the present: He judges righteously in that He absolves everyone who believes in Jesus Christ. God gave Him as the offering who would by His blood obtain reconciliation for those who believe. (Romans 3:25-26 and Romans 5:11)
- We must truly rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation.

We must not think that our reconciliation depends on our own choice or decision. The grace of God is greater than this.

- Our full salvation is the work of God.
- He reconciled us with Him through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18)

Before his death the apostle John described us the greatness of God's love: **"This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."** (1 John 4:10)

That is why we read that the Lord admonishes us to keep His Sabbath and to respect His sanctuary.

- Everybody knows that the Sabbath is the day of worship and that the Lord's meaning is that your worship must be true and regular.
- This verse carries a truly prophetic element, namely that our keeping of the Sabbath shall end in the eternal Sabbath with the Lord – as we confess in our creeds.
- The life eternal is the eternal Sabbath that is given to us by the grace of the blood of the Lord Jesus.

The reference to the Lord's **"sanctuary"** says that the place where we worship truly is also the place where God is present – also prophetic bearing in mind Revelation 21:2-5: **"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."**

Amen

Prayer

Psalm: 65:3

Form for Holy Communion

Psalm: 63:3

During Holy Communion: Psalm 116 and 118

Closing prayer

Closing Psalm: 2:4

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

Amen

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6 May 2007 (morning)

Scripture NIV