

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 20 MAY 2007: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 34:3

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 107:1

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 16:2.

Law

Psalm: 16:2

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: 32:4

Scripture: Philippians 4

Text: Philippians 4:7

"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Holy Communion is for the true believer an event of great joy, because it again confirms to him that the Lord has forgiven him his sins and that the Lord assures him of a dwelling in the hereafter.

This joy should always be part of the life of all true believers.

In this sermon we consider the following:

1. **The rejoicing of the Philippians.**
2. **What is the result of us knowing the peace of God?**

1. **The rejoicing of the Philippians**

The church at Philippi was a remarkable church. The city and the church comprised peoples from many different nations.

- The town was started as a place where Roman soldiers could retire.
- These soldiers were not only Romans but also from other nations.
- And other people who were not soldiers also lived there.

One may assume that this was a community of tough hardened people where conflict would arise easily.

- The Lord now sends them a message: Rejoice in the Lord.
- Joy, that is joyful faith and joyful life, is the theme in what we have read.

When verse 14 says: **Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!** The intention is not that the church at Philippi must only speak of joy.

- It must radiate from them.
- Their whole being and all they do must testify of the joy that they derive from their relationship with the Lord.

That is why verse 5 continues to say that the gentleness, friendliness of the church members must be evident to all people.

- The believers must conduct themselves in such a way towards one another and towards all people that everybody notices their goodwill to all people.
- Everybody must notice that they are lenient towards others and that in their style of living there is no place for backbiting and other forms of hatefulness.

The word "all" is important.

- It means that the believers must not be loving and cordial only among themselves.
- They must include all people in their friendliness and cordiality in their inspiration to express their rejoicing in the Lord.

The approach of this text is important too.

- The true believers are not warned with the judgment of the Lord at His Second Coming.
- It is not said that we shall be punished when the Lord comes and He finds that we were unfriendly and inhospitable.

The approach is entirely different.

- You must rejoice in the Lord!
- The point is that little time is left but in the time we have we must exalt in our rejoicing so that we may be as we should when the Lord comes.

Verse 6 contains a reason why we should be joyful.

- It is only joyful life in the Lord that can make our anxieties disappear.
- All people experience anxiety and fear at some time or another.
- Anxiety, fear, suffering and troubles are contrary to a joyful life.

Usually these stresses cause us to become depressed. But there is a way out and we can take precautions to prevent such results.

- We have ways of combating fear and anxiety.
- In such times we must go to the Lord in prayer and petition with thanksgiving.

This verse deals with our personal relationship with the Lord.

- How do we pray?
- And when do we pray?

Many people know God only when they are in trouble. That is wrong.

- The Lord teaches us very clearly that He wants us to worship Him.
- That means to honour and serve Him.
- And to petition Him for what we need.
- And more importantly, we must give thanks!

The Lord wants to see our rejoicing in our prayers also.

Here the Lord shows the true believer to be a person whose heart runs over with joy in the Lord and who does not permit this joy to be affected by the wickedness of men or the evil with which the devil stalks us.

If our relationship with the Lord is such that we look to the Lord for all help and blessing then we know the peace of God.

- The peace of God is to receive the grace of God and to make it your own.
- The peace of God is a certainty we have in us that teaches us that we belong to the Lord and that He directs our well-being of body and soul completely to our advantage.
- The peace of God is to know that God loves me so much that He gives me all this mercy without me deserving anything.
- Mercy is a gratuitous gift that God gives.
- The peace of God is to know without doubt that I am reconciled with God in Jesus Christ.
- The peace of God is something that the Lord works in a way that surpasses my understanding.
- It surpasses all cleverness.
- It surpasses all argument.
- It surpasses all human ability.

The peace the Lord gives us is therefore something that is bestowed on us out of grace through Jesus Christ and which is on such a high plane that we are unable to reach it with our mind and intelligence. It transcends everything.

2. What is the result of us knowing the peace of God?

We are going to live an honest and good life.

- Because we know the joy of belonging to the Lord and have the peace of salvation in us, we shall do only what is honourable and pure.
- The loveliness of the Lord's presence shall shine forth from us!

Our good life shall be marked by a certain style.

- We shall not do admirable and praiseworthy things with a heavy heart and laboriously.
- As if we drag ourselves with heavy feet through a righteous life. We shall live joyfully.
- Everybody will see from the joyfulness with which we do everything and live admirably in what relationship we are with God.
- That will spur the people who do not have this to seek this peace and joy that comes from God.
- In that way we gain our neighbour for Christ!

Let us now apply this to our life and the Lord's Supper. How do we live? Have you noticed our manner of greeting?

- When we are asked about our well-being very few of us will immediately and spontaneously answer joyfully that we are well.
- We usually answer that we are tolerable or that we are surviving or reluctantly admit that we are well.
- It is an unfortunate truth that we do not show the rejoicing in the Lord and the peace of God in our greetings.

The Lord calls us all to sit at His table at Holy Communion. We are now preparing ourselves for that.

- At this table He shall reveal to us the greatest miracle imaginable – which is that we must live in joy and happiness because on the cross He bore all our grief and anxiety.
- We shall hear again that He has forgiven us our sins – also our sin of heavy heartedness and lack of joy and happiness.
- It is not that we do not have any joy and happiness to celebrate – but we fail to see it and to show it. That is sin.

At the table of Holy Communion the Lord shall also confirm to us that we can in this life overcome everything that is bad and depressing because in Jesus Christ we were made free from all that.

We also receive the assurance that in the Lord Jesus we are assured of the life eternal.

Brothers and sisters, consider what this means. We shall then know that we must change our way of life so that we joyfully proclaim the peace of God until the Lord comes again. We have a duty, when the Lord comes, to welcome Him with peace and rejoicing.

That must be shown in our present life – do whatever is true and noble, live righteously and saintly. Do things that are lovely and praiseworthy.

Amen

Closing prayer
Closing Psalm: 43:3+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

*Dr MJ Du Plessis
Reformed Church Bellville
20 May 2007 (morning)
Scripture NIV*