

Worshipping God Together

Call to worship

Minister: All the ends of the earth will remember
and turn to the Lord, and all the
families of the nations will bow down
before him,

**All: for dominion belongs to the Lord
and he rules over the nations.**

He's got the whole world in his hands

Opening prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Let us pray:

Father God, we come to you as your children;
not because we have earned a place in your heart,
but because you have known us,
and loved us since before we were born.
We rejoice in the freedom we have found in Christ.
we rejoice in being one with our sisters and brothers
all over the world.
we rejoice in your love for us and for all your children.

Forgive us for not accepting ourselves
as the individuals you created;
forgive us for trying to cover up
our shortcomings and faults.
We ask this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy
kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give
us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts as we
forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver
us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever.
Amen.

Children's address – Ann Dunlop

MP 139

Father, we adore you

Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: Galatians 3:26-4:11 (NT page 1170-1171)

Reader: Barbara Dainter

Background to the reading

In the letter to the Galatians there are a lot of hidden cultural clues, which I will try to explain.

Paul writes this letter after his second visit to Galatia according to Acts 18:23. The reason for his writing to the Galatians seems to be that he was accused of having an evil eye. The "evil eye" was and still is, a common phenomenon in the Mediterranean and other parts of the world. In their society with values such as honor and shame, someone who "envied" others, were accused of having the evil eye. And this evil eye was believed to cause serious harm to yourself, and your property. To avert the evil eye, several methods could be followed like painting your house blue, by wearing an "evil eye bracelet to ward of the evil eye, to avoid a direct look, to spit and to make certain gestures. Babies, young children, pregnant woman and those who were involved in any rites of passage like those who were baptized. Baptism was a rite of passage to all those who did not know Christ. Once they came to faith, they confessed their faith and were baptized, meaning they were accepted not as incomers but as those who now belong to Christ too.

But the remarkable thing is that Paul hits back at his accusers by accusing them of "bewitching" the Galatian believers with their "evil eye" in chapter 3. They were bewitched by believing that the law of Moses will justify them before God. Paul says that Christ has fulfilled every letter of the law, and no one is cursed/bewitched anymore. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus

Christ on the cross, and His full pardon, believers are now justified through their faith in Him.

And because of Christ, every believer are a son of God through faith alone. In the Old Testament Israel was often referred to as the son of God. But now because of Christ's redemption, every person under the sun, who has faith in Him, are called His son.

And Paul says that their new identity was confirmed through their rite of passage by ways of baptism. They have been "clothed" with Christ meaning their older garments were being thrown away and given a new garment namely their new life in Christ. And because of their faith in Christ, they are no longer slaves of the law of Moses or any other dogma that says otherwise. God gave His Spirit to them in order to equip and convince them to accept their new status not only as a son but also a heir of God.

So Paul actually says to them that he accepts that they have been vulnerable as "those who have just gone through the rites of passage and have been bewitched by the evil eye, they must not turn back to their old ways. They must remember their new status and identity as people who belong to Christ or in the words of the epistle as people who were being clothed with Christ.

In verses 12-20 Paul pleads with them that he does not have the evil eye and that they must indeed refocus of who really has the evil eye. He preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them in comparison to his accusers who wanted to convert them to the law of works by which everyone is "cursed".

Amen

MP 750

What kind of love is this?

Sermon

The text verses for the sermon are: ²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

We have reason to believe that baptism was regarded as a rite of passage in the early church and that the words "clothed" with Christ had a profound meaning. It meant that the old was replaced by the new. It meant that the older garment was replaced by a newer garment. And we know that the people really on all levels grasped this total transformation just as we know still happens in all parts of the world. In Africa for instance a rite of passage usually occurs when a boy becomes a man and then have to prove himself as a man.

Baptism meant a great deal in the early church. Today, however we tend to regard baptism as just something that needs to be done without attaching any meaning to it. In the letter to the Galatians we are once again reminded of the significant meaning of our baptism.

Through our baptism, we have become the sons and daughters of Christ through faith alone. We have become His children and His heirs through his mercy and grace without us having done anything. Yes we too have been "clothed" with Christ.

But what does it mean to us living in the 21st century?

Well it means we have a invisible tag on our foreheads just as we have tags on our clothes. Last Sunday I jokingly referred to such a tag. Let me explain, I like the fashion house of Armani a lot. So when I heard that Heather bought herself an Armani jacket, I was in awe. So she then tore of the Armani tag and stitched it onto my robes. So my robes suddenly have now been transformed into a "fashionable robe", al be it jokingly!

But on a serious note, tags gives meaning and identity. No name brands does not have the same exposure as those who have.

So if we say we belong to Christ, we need to show it by ways of our living and talking and thinking. We are not orphans anymore. We are his children meaning we represent Him everywhere we

go. What the people know of God through Christ, they will see in the ways we live, what they hear about God through Christ, they will hear in the way we talk, what they expect to receive from God through Christ, they will receive through our actions of love and mercy. We have a big responsibility to behave like children of God at the Galadays, at the Parks, where we work and where we play.

And we are known by God. He knows everything about us. He knows all our thoughts.

May we show off our new clothes in Christ everywhere we go!

Amen

Responding to God's word

Our offerings are given for the ministry and mission of the church while we sing **MP 755: "When I survey the wondrous cross"**.

Prayer of thanksgiving: Robert Gardiner

Colours of day

Benediction Receive the blessing of God and go in peace:

We have worshipped in freedom, but the world is groaning in chains, torn by division, and desperate for love. Now send us out, dear Lord, to bring your freedom, harmony and love as we share the life-changing message of Christ the Saviour. And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit Be with you all, Now and for evermore

Sung Amen