

SERMON – 17 MAY 2015

READING – PSALM 1

The text verse for the sermon is verse 6: “For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction”.

Our Psalm was written a long time ago in a time and a context that is far removed from our context and time.

Our Psalm reflects a homogenous society where everyone was Jewish, where everyone talked the same language, dressed in the same way, where the same rules and traditions applied and where everyone adhered to the teachings of God’s law as it was revealed to Moses. No one stood out except the foreigners who came from other countries. And because everything was ordered and regulated, those who did not adhere to the rules, were visible and openly breaking the rules. They were regarded as the wicked, the ungodly, unholy and unclean. Indeed, whenever they had to appear in a court of law, they would have been condemned because only two witnesses could either confirm or deny your innocence. They had no future and their circumstances would be dire.

But in comparison to the wicked, all the others in their society who did adhere to God’s law were regarded as the righteous. They had a future and God was looking after them.

But things have changed since then. If Jesus did not come to save us from our sins, we would have been condemned. We would have been the “wicked” according to this Psalm. And without the ascension of Jesus we, too, would not have a future to be with God in all eternity.

On this coming Thursday, a very important event was celebrated in the Reformed world church, namely the ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven. In antiquity a king would conquer the enemy on the battlefields, take hold of his throne and govern it with might and power. But it was always only the most important people who could come into the presence of the king and only a few who would get the chance to speak to him. Usually when the king did conquer the enemy EVERYONE joined in the celebrations. After all, the struggle and suffering were over and they could continue with their lives. In this case it was a “win/lose” situation.

In the ascension of Jesus, however the opposite is true. It is not victory over the other where the conqueror killed the loser. No - in Jesus' case it is a victory for the sake of the other. It is a “win/win” situation for all. The ascension of Jesus is a symbol of the victory of the enemy of life, namely death. This victory is for everyone. There is no one in shame. There are no losers. There are just those who are celebrating. God's domain, heaven and earth (human's domain) come together in these celebrations. And everyone has access to the King of Kings – not only those who are important in the eyes of the world.

Everyone sings the song of victory together. Everyone is ONE in voice and spirit. No one rejoices in the shame or the humiliation of the other. Everyone is focused in rejoicing the KING of all KINGS for mercy, goodness and love. Yes in these celebrations the thanks, praise and honour belongs to Jesus Christ who reigns our lives with love, mercy and grace. We belong to Him in life and death. He is our only future and hope.

We are called to be the celebrants of his heavenly feast. We have to rejoice in songs of praise and thanksgiving for His heavenly intervention. We are called to be witnesses of the

victory for the sake of the other and for the sake for each other. We are called to live lives that are full of God's love, mercy and grace. We have to reflect the Glory of God in everything we do, say and think. We have to reflect with our lives - His new kingdom that is so utterly different from any kingdom that we know, a Kingdom of eternal peace. We have to show the world that we are redeemed sinners, with the living hope of inheriting God's kingdom. We are not losers anymore but victors who have been freed.

Every time we choose to reflect God's kingdom in our lives, every time we live as those who have received the pardon of God, every time we live out the goodness, inclusive love, mercy and grace of God, every time we include others above ourselves, Jesus returns and is with us through His Holy Spirit.

The world cannot see God – we are the reflection of Him as we are made in His image. Jesus showed us how to be the image of God through inclusive LOVE.

There is the story of the famous sculptor who was chiselling on a block of marble, creating a sculpture of a horse. A person asked him: How do you do it? He answered: It is simple; you take the block of marble and just remove everything that does not look like a horse.

Let us take our lives and remove everything that does not look like the image of God.

And every time we wonder about our sins and our wickedness let's read Psalm 1 through the glasses of God's incredible mercy. Indeed God is looking after us – now and always.

Amen