

## **SERMON ON LORD'S DAY 4 BY REV W. HUIZINGA**

### LITURGY

Votum and Salutation

Psalm 79:1,2

Ten Words of the Covenant      or Confession of Faith

Psalm 79:3,5

Hymn 1A

Congregational Prayer

Thankoffering

Psalm 97:1,2,3

Read - Lord's Day 4

- Arts 14,15, B.C.

- Psalm 5

Sermon

### **THREE ATTEMPTS TO AVOID GOD'S JUDGMENT.**

Sinners try to avoid judgment by pleading:

- 1. God asks what I can't do!**
- 2. God will not judge me, will He?**
- 3. God as Judge shows mercy!**

Psalm 97:5,6

Prayer of Application and Thanks

Hymn 21:5,7

Benediction

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Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As you stand by the deathbed of a beloved one whose life has wasted away because of disease or sudden calamity, you cannot help asking "*why?*" You think back to paradise and say: "*Oh, if Adam and Eve had known what they would cause! They never would have fallen for the vicious lies of the Tempter!*" Have you ever asked a similar question? I have. I imagine you would too.

How quickly paradise was lost! One mindless moment of madness results in millennia of misery. That is the awful nature of disobedience. It seems as though you can sin at leisure, but it is a lie. Marital unfaithfulness causes untold misery. It finds you out. Sometimes you can restore the marriage and the relationships. Sometimes they are ruined for good.

For centuries now the Triune God labours to restore what our first parents destroyed. Of what delights and blessings they deprived themselves! How they robbed us, their seed, of divine gifts! And it only took a few moments.

Today we pay attention to the justice of God, its effects and curses. As we confess God is fair and just, we remind ourselves of our only comfort. We belong to Jesus Christ, who is our righteousness from God (I Cor. 1:30). I preach to you God's Word as we confessed it in L.D.4 under this \*THEME:

## **THREE ATTEMPTS TO AVOID GOD'S JUDGMENT.**

Sinners try to avoid judgment by pleading:

- 1. God asks what I can't do!**
- 2. God will not judge me, will He?**
- 3. God as Judge shows mercy!**

### **1. God asks what I can't do!**

*Q. But does not God do man an injustice by requiring in his law what man cannot do?*

*A. No, for God so created man that he was able to do it.*

*But man, at the instigation of the devil, in deliberate disobedience robbed himself and all his descendants of these gifts (Q.&A.9).*

Is that not right? What do you think of a school teacher who requires his first graders to know the alphabet, know how to read and how to add and subtract, even before they start Year 1? *That's unreasonable* (or even more choice words), moms would argue. *Impossible for that age!*

If at home mom wants the Year 12 student, who is studying hard for their final state exams, to do the laundry and ironing, dishes and vacuuming as well as cooking, the student is going to protest or someone is going to break down. Impossible!

God cannot expect us to do the impossible. Is God not fair? That is what the Bible says. So how can He demand perfection from us?

Such a question betrays pride. Did our first parents not fall through pride? Yes! When God faced them, they tried to sidestep their guilt. Here too, indignant at the prospect of admitting guilt, the sinful protestor tries to shift the blame. In the process the guilty party tells God which standard should be applied. Since man cannot love God and love his neighbour as he ought, it is ridiculous to keep asking the impossible, he claims. It only brings friction. You cannot be expected to scale a sheer cliff without ropes or helps. It is sheer suicide; totally unfair! How do you expect a person who cannot do any good, who is inclined to all evil, to obey God's commands; yes, to keep them perfectly? *"That's impossible!"*

Does this protestor have a just cause? What is the standard? Is it fallen man who hates instead of loves? Or is it the unchanging demands of a holy, covenant God? If fallen man is the norm, then we should concede that he cannot keep God's Word and thus God is unjust in maintaining them. Then the acceptable standard must drop drastically to equal realistic expectations. And is this not what we practise? If you teachers demand unrealistic goals, as students like us to believe, then you students protest. *Sir, we have so*

*much homework already! And we have catechism tonight. It is impossible!* At work you bosses learn not to expect too much from one day. If the boss demands an excessive agenda of finished projects, he breeds unhappiness on all sides. Keep the list realistic. Otherwise, one always feels rushed and dissatisfied.

Must God then let us off the hook? Must God lower his standards? Allow me one example to answer these questions.

I think of an expert tailor who wanted to open a tailoring business to make uniforms – for the armed forces. He has a contract with them. At the same time he decides to build a luxurious seven bedroom home with three bathrooms for his family of five. Only the best! He visits the bank and they are willing to loan a million dollars for him to get started. Seeing he will work for the armed forces, they will take the risk. A heavy investment! He buys only the best machinery; recruits the best tailors. However, he trusts no chartered accountants or accountants with his money. He tries to do that himself, rather than sticking with his expertise. Then this middle-aged tailor becomes seriously sick with heart problems. The business declines as a result.

The bank sends urgent reminders that payments are overdue on his outstanding loan.

But the tailor emotionally pleads with the loans manager, *Look, I cannot repay because I am seriously ill and I have more pressing problems to face; leave me alone!* Do you really think that a sober-minded ‘facts and figures’ manager at the bank will accept such an excuse? Obviously not! Why not? That man had the ability to repay. He has a lucrative contract with the armed forces. He could expect a tidy profit. What did he do with it? He also should make sure it can run without him. Allowing a business to run down because of personal illness is no excuse. The bank is right. He must make those monthly payments. Otherwise he forfeits his business and his luxury house. It is his own fault.

Our catechism makes the same points. We had the ability. We enjoyed the privileges and gifts to do it all. But we squandered them. It is our own fault. God created us good, able to show true and complete love. We could obey God's laws. As God's image we could love, exercise dominion and live with God in holiness. But the deliberate disobedience of our first parents robbed us of that ability. Thus we have no right to complain to God that He is unjust. God is not at fault. God should keep to his demands. We must keep paying the bills – love God and love your neighbour.

All these protests get us nowhere. Job tried to storm heaven with such complaints of unfairness, but he ended up repenting in dust and ashes.

God keeps to his high, holy standards. Jesus, our teacher, repeated the covenant demands of God's justice in his Sermon on the Mount

*For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and*

*Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven...You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:18-20).*

This is very practical. Apply it practically.

The big change is really in us and not in God. We cannot keep God's commands anymore.

We come to our second protest.

## **2. God will not judge me, will He?**

Many just refuse to think that God will judge them personally. Not me!

And you can try to excuse yourself. You say, *heh, I was not there; I did not rebel!* So a further question issues from the protestor. *We did not bring this sin and corruption on ourselves. We had nothing to do with it. Why should we be punished now?*

How do we answer this protest? It again seems reasonable. But is it right? Is there not a corporate sense of guilt? We people all descend from one blood, from one set of parents. We are not individuals. God presents Adam as the first man, the first representative man. Just listen:

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned...For if by one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life (Romans 5:12-18).*

By one man's (Adam's) disobedience corruption, sickness and death spread **to all people**. The catechism rightly calls Adam and Eve (Q&A.7) **our first parents**.

Let me use an example. Our state government sinks billions into a unionised, power company that is on the verge of bankruptcy. The company supplies a basic commodity – electrical power, which is at a premium in this state. But over time it appears the government has thrown good money after bad. The company really was a sinking ship. In the process the government loses billions. Who suffers? Everyone in this state! We citizens pay the bills. You can argue till the cows come home *I was against the decision, and why should I suffer?* But the reality remains that you are involved. You belong to this state.

You similarly belong to Adam and Eve. Your very natures mark you as children of the traitors. Corrupt natures, sinfulness in all its forms comes from them. Yes, this sin infects your whole nature and not just part of you. Your mind or intellect, your heart and emotions as well as your will all become infected with evil.

*It is a corruption of the entire nature of man and a hereditary evil which infects even infants in their mother's womb. As a root it produces in man all sorts of sin (art 15, B.C.).*

This means you are included with your first parents. It affects you too.

God has the right to avenge our sins in anger and punishment.

But the modern image of our God is a loving grandfather, who would not hurt a flea, let alone a human being. The God of the Bible favours the abolition of capital punishment, and favours human rights for all. That is the modern perception.

Is this what the Bible says? Not so!

Think of how God punished the unrepentant world with the flood – every living being ended up drowned in the flood waters over the whole earth. World-wide destruction! That is a totally different image than what modern man has of God. God reveals that He is just, awesomely and fearsomely just. God is not scared to execute justice either.

God destroyed a whole lush valley and turned it into a sea of salt. Burning sulphurous stones bombarded the valley, leaving the godless population in ruins. Please remember how the people in those days resembled modern, western people. They thought human rights important. Homosexuals did not consider their lifestyle abnormal or wrong. They blatantly and viciously pursued their lifestyle. God responded with fearsome justice.

Think how God often punished Israel! At Meribah, at Massah and at Baal-Peor God severely punished their iniquity. The LORD our God is a God of justice. No doubt about it!

Think of Revelations – God's seven seals unleash heavy judgment, with the last seal bringing the final judgment. They are awesome judgments to be feared. We do not like to hear these truths. At the very least, we do not like to think that they apply to us, but only to others. Yet that is not true. Whenever we sin, God's justice requires that He correct and chastise us.

Nahum 1 reminds us of God's justice. That Israel had allied itself with other nations for protection against Assyria, ended in bitter defeats. God punished them for it. But had God forgotten Israel? No! Assyria would feel the rod of God's anger. With forceful language Nahum portrays God's indignation against godless enemy,

*The LORD is a jealous God and avenging,  
the LORD is avenging and wrathful;  
the LORD takes vengeance of his adversaries  
and keeps wrath for his enemies.  
The LORD is slow to anger and of great might,  
and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty.  
His way is in whirlwind and storm,  
and the clouds are the dust of his feet (1:2,3).*

Once the whirlwind and storm-clouds of God's anger gather, man has no hope of avoiding it or surviving it.

This is not only an OT theme but the consistent theme of the covenant God throughout history. For example, Paul ends his first letter to the Corinthians by stating, "*if any one has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha*" (16:22).

And listen to this,

*A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God,*

*and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:28-31)*

That is sober language, which urges us not to spurn the love of God in Christ, but to flee to Christ for protection.

Jesus did not mince his words about what our sins deserve. Rebellion and unbelief receive temporal and eternal punishment. If Egypt groped blind as bats because of a thick blanket of darkness, in eternity they and all the ungodly will be thrown into *outer and utter darkness*, where they will *weep and wail and gnash their teeth*. Such graphic terms puts the message across. Am I trying to scare you? No, just trying to be realistic so that we will value the great rescue Jesus gives us from the coming judgment.

All of us deserve both temporal and eternal punishment. Our original sin, inherited from our first parents, and our daily, actual sins deserve just that. Already here on this earth our sins will find us out. We pay for our mistakes. We suffer for our sins. Sometimes we suffer for that original sin. Even believers in our midst suffer dreaded diseases such as cancer. We might ask "why?" The answer is that the original sin of Adam and Eve brought God's curses. We still suffer the consequences today. Oh, if only they had stood still to think! Afterward they must have kicked themselves a thousand times! Not one of can say we do not deserve it. Let us tremble at the sentence of God when our first parents were expelled from his presence and favour. Let us tremble at the words in the baptismal form that our children are conceived and born in sin and therefore by nature are **children of wrath**, so that they and we cannot enter into the kingdom of God unless we are born again. Let the many judgments of God, recorded in the Bible, teach us the fear of God. Then we learn to recognise our sin and misery in a meaningful manner, to our comfort.

God's righteousness also means He keeps the standards of the covenant. In that way He will redeem Israel. That brings us to our last point.

### **3. But God as Judge shows mercy, does He not?**

Q.&A.11 refers to God's mercy. Is God not also merciful? Is God not slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love? Is his mercy towards those who fear Him? Of course.

However, you understand the aim of the sinful protestor, namely, to suppress the justice of God by accenting God's mercy.

It does not work. God is fully just. At the same time God is fully merciful. You cannot negate the one by the other.

In the OT sin had to be atoned. That is justice. You could bring a lamb or bull or goat to take your place. That is mercy.

In the NT the justice and mercy of God unite in the one atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

*We believe that God, who is perfectly merciful and just, sent his Son to assume that nature in which disobedience had been committed, to make satisfaction in that same nature; and to bear the punishment of sin by his most bitter passion and death. God therefore manifested his justice*

*against his Son, when He laid our iniquity on Him, and poured out his goodness and mercy on us, who were guilty and worthy of damnation. Out of a most perfect love He gave his Son to die for us and He raised Him for our justification that through Him we might obtain immortality and life eternal (Art. 20, B.C.).*

Follow the sufferings and trial of Christ. See him in Gethsemane. Blood drips from his brow. With piercing cries He pleads for mercy, pleading that the cup may pass him by. But no, the cup of justice must be owned. Drink it! See him mocked and cruelly scourged. Hear the mob scream, "crucify Him." Then hear Him cry aloud, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Then you see God's righteousness. Sins against Him deserve that severe punishment. Rather than leave your sins unpunished, God has punished them in his beloved Son. As Peter writes, "Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (1 Peter 3:18). In doing so God demonstrated his mercy to you.

Hear then, brothers and sisters, how God's justice ends up bringing you eternal comfort in Jesus Christ. Believe in your Redeemer. Hide yourself in Jesus. Walk humbly and thankfully with Him. For the dreaded alternative is to face the living God all on your own. You then must answer God's justice fully and eternally. As Isaiah says,

*Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds. Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have done shall be done to him (3:10,11).*

Amen.

**Prayer: (after the Law)**

**Love**

I have often sung the words

I love the LORD

The fount of life and grace.

But do I really love You above all?

Do I really put you first

Above myself, my family, my spouse?

I have said the words

I love you

To my spouse, my family, and to my neighbour –

But do I really love?

Do I really put first

Others or self?

Am I patient and kind?

Or am I jealous, proud, ugly,

Irritable, bitter?

Have I yet learned

Not to be happy about injustice

But to stand firmly with truth,

To cover a multitude of sins,

In hope and faith

To give others the benefit of all doubt,

To willingly endure suffering?

Lord, You know how short of such love

My feeble love now falls.

You know too

That it is because You first loved me

That I love at all

And that I want to love

As I have been loved.

Fan the flickering flame

In my heart

So that in all I do

I may reflect

The measureless, endless,

Unspeakable love

Of Jesus Christ,

In whose name we pray. Amen.