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Bible study: Psalm 33:12: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance!"

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Praise be to the name of the Lord for all his goodness, his mercy, and especially for his precious and holy Word in which his entire plan for mankind is contained.

And I believe there has not been a period of time for a long while in which it could be said repeatedly: "***Today this Scripture has been fulfilled before your eyes.***" [Luk 4:21]

We believe that we are living in a time when Bible prophecy is being fulfilled before our very eyes. It really no longer needs to be interpreted, but as has often been said, it is enough to see it being fulfilled and to place it in its proper context.

Yet, we have also heard that not everyone believes what is preached. The faith that comes from hearing a sermon is a gift for those who believe what is proclaimed through the sermon. There is no faith that comes from God which could exist alongside the preaching of the Word. There may be human opinions and much more besides, but we only attain union with God through true faith, when we allow the Word to speak to us and get it transfigured by the Spirit and are thus brought into complete harmony with God.

There is so much happening that needs to be discussed or maybe spoken about, and particularly in our country, throughout Europe. And I hope no one gets the impression as if we were giving a political lecture here. That is certainly not the point. But when events occur that are part of Bible prophecy, then we must address them.

For more than 20 years I have repeatedly said what was to come, namely the proclamation of "peace and safety" [1Th 5:3].

I have also said that for this to happen, the division of the country and the continent must come to an end. You all know, you who have been listening all these years, what has been said. I do not know whether we as a people alone—we invite all our neighbors to join us, for soon it will no longer matter what nationality we were born with, but everything will be absorbed into this Roman Empire that is emerging before us.

And I have just finished writing a circular letter today. I shall touch on that briefly. We have indeed, as far as developments are concerned, reached the end of days. And I would like us to see very clearly, in the days of Jesus our Lord, it was Rome that was in power. I've just read it recently, it was the Roman occupation, it was the Roman soldiers who wove the crown of thorns and placed it upon the Lord's head. One must compare history with what happened back then and actually put things into their proper context.

When Paul spoke before Festus, before Agrippa, before Felix, and had to answer for himself, he was proud to be a Roman citizen. Others had had to pay dearly for this citizenship. He was a Roman citizen and testified to it here. And I say this only to make it clear to us what Bible prophecy entails for the end times and what it has foretold.

In Acts 22, Acts 22 from verse 25 it says:

[25] ***And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?***

You can read on if you like, right to the end of the chapter. I would then like to read from chapter 24 of the book of Acts, Acts 24 verses 4 and 5:

[4] ***Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.***

[5] ***For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:***

Here is the phrase: "***throughout the Roman Empire***".

The prophet Daniel, as we can read, saw the great sea stirred up and he saw how four powers, depicted as beasts, emerged from this great sea. [Dan 7:2-3]

He saw the course of all time right up to the present day.

The seer on the Isle of Patmos saw the same thing in the 13th chapter of Revelation, that a power rises out of the sea.

God has always used symbols, and if we look at the individual codes of arms of the countries, here an eagle, there some other animal as a national emblem, and before nations could use them in this way, God had already shown and demonstrated in visions what was to come. The seer on the Isle of Patmos explained that this power was there and then was no more and then emerged again and exercised its power to the full because the dragon himself had given him his throne. [Rev 13:2, Rev 17:8]

I know that for many this may seem like a puzzle at the moment, something they cannot make much sense of, but since we are now actually living in such serious times, we must also address it. However, I am aware that there may be people who

are new to this, who have never heard the Word or indeed the proclamation of the Gospel in this way, let alone ever had the doctrinal aspects or the prophetic part of the plan of salvation preached to them.

And yet everything in the Bible is important. There's nothing that can simply be skipped over or overlooked, especially not when it relates to our own day and age. And we simply must have clarity from God. And this clarity does not come from some academic chair, it must be granted to us by grace through the Holy Spirit from the Word. And then it is truly the case that we are taught by God and led into the details that are simply very relevant today.

As I just said, the point is that here in central Europe, the final world power is emerging and it is emerging before our very eyes. The division is over. It is the 3rd of October—I say this now as a German, and please let all our friends understand: I was moved to tears, not just once but on many occasions, for I belong to the war generation. I make no secret of it: I had to wear the Hitler youth uniform at the age of 12 and did after all experience the final part of the war. I witnessed the division firsthand and also what followed. Whenever I traveled, whether through the corridor or to other countries, I felt all too often what all that had entailed. The guilty parties were no longer there, and the people suffered. I want all our neighbors to understand that no war will ever come from German soil again.

I'm moved by something quite different, namely the following thought: that from this soil, from which so much calamity has emanated, the greeting 'Heil' was associated with a great deal of calamity for our neighboring peoples, for half the world, and ultimately also for our own people. May it be God's will that the completion of the Reformation, which leads back to the full restoration and the divine order of early Christianity, may, if it pleases the Lord, proceed from here and reach the whole world, and that service be rendered to the Church of the living God with all faithfulness and in all truthfulness, so that God might attain his right with his people.

We have not received a national spirit but the Spirit of God, and we know that the Lord calls out his own people, his redeemed flock, from every tongue, people, and nation. [Rev 5:9, Rev 7:9]

The proof of this is indeed evident among us today. God does not think in national terms; He thinks of the whole of humanity and therefore already said to Abraham: "***In thee all nations of the earth shall be blessed.***" [Gen 12:3]

But so that Scripture may be fulfilled and a brief period of persecution and pressure may be brought to bear upon those who do not conform and do not submit, all this must come to pass, and so that it may be proclaimed: "Peace and safety" [1Th 5:3].

We will not go into this topic in greater detail. Some things will be written in the circular letter, and we can return to it in future publications.

What moves me far more, however, is the fact that God has such a hard time getting people to believe Him. Just imagine that God has to plead and beg for people to

believe Him. Who do we think God actually is, and who has the right and dares to take the liberty to question and cast a doubt on what God has said in His Word? I believe we must realize that we are dealing with the living God who will truly call all humanity to account at the last judgment. In the meantime, however—and this may sound strange at the moment—it appears, or indeed it is the case, that God has left the decision up to human beings.

Right from the very beginning in the Garden of Eden, man was able to choose, he was able to make a decision; they could believe or not believe, be obedient or disobedient, obey or transgress, and it seems to be so right to the end. Transgression came, separation from God followed, and so man degenerated and separated from God, has gone his own way, and continues to do so until he finds the way, the truth, and the life. [Joh 14:6]

Perhaps I should be even clearer. Killing began right at the very start; Cain was the first murderer, and it continues right up to the present day. [Gen 4:8]

Whoever wants to kill, kills; whoever wants to steal, steals; whoever wants to lie, lies; everyone does as they please; whoever wishes to cheat, cheats, and people think they can get away with everything. And then there are those who think that with death it's all over. But that is not the case. There is life after death; there is a reckoning. And the Holy Scriptures teach us that the wrath of God remains upon all who do not accept the grace in Christ. [Joh 3:36]

It is truly essential that people allow themselves to be incorporated into God's plan, that they experience the salvation of their souls and liberation from their own self-centeredness, that they undergo a conversion, a complete turning point, and thus come to a living faith in the living God.

We have heard a wonderful opening Word, but I must be quite honest: I prefer the Scriptures that highlight the positive rather than those that emphasize reproach. But both are reported in a balanced way in Holy Scripture. In Acts 13 we read: "***All who were ordained for eternal life believed.***" [Act 13:48]

Earlier in the book of Acts we read: "***And the multitude of believers was of one heart and one soul.***" [Act 4:32]

The thought of unity in Christ has already been conveyed to us here. Not different mindsets and opinions, but the mind of Jesus Christ may dwell in us all, and that is what matters. For thus it is written: "***Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.***" [Php 2:5]

I would like to read a few scriptures so that God may speak directly to us through His Word, and then we too may give Him our answer. From the Gospel of Mark chapter 7, I will read the last verse, verse 37. Mark chapter 7 verse 37:

[37] ***And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.***

We have just said that humanity, separated from God, does as it pleases and believes it owes no account to itself, to others, let alone to God. Here we are dealing with a work of our Lord. And even then opinions were divided; some believed, others did not. Some said, "***Never has a man spoken like this man speaks.***" [Joh 7:46]

Others said, "***He has Beelzebub, and that is how all this is done.***" [Mar 3:22]

Opinions have always been divided, and the masses have described the divine as coming from the enemy and vice versa. Unless God grants us grace, we too will make a misjudgment. It is therefore necessary that we search the Scriptures and find our answer there.

I would like to read from Psalm 33 verses 6 to 12. I actually wanted to have this text read first. Psalm 33 from verse 6 to 12:

[6] ***By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.***

[7] ***He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.***

[8] ***Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.***

[9] ***For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.***

Now we have had many philosophers who have swept aside the divine account of the creation of heaven and earth and who have spoken of the primordial cell, of the life that is supposed to have developed from it, of the big bang and so on. Who still believes today what we have just read? "***For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.***" [Psa 33:9]

Strangely enough, there is now a whole movement that simply can no longer swallow the teachings of Darwin and all the others and says they cannot be right. Somehow there must have been a great intelligence behind it all. There are some even among scholars who are coming to their senses.

I continue reading from verse 10.

[10] ***The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.***

[11] ***The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.***

And now comes verse 12:

[12] ***Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.***

There is an election that should not be viewed as partial, as though God had chosen some and not others. There is an election based on divine foreknowledge. God knew who would believe and who would not believe, who would accept and who would not accept, and was therefore able to inscribe the names of those who would come to believe in Him in the Book of Life even before the foundation of the world [Rev 13:8, Rev 17:8].

God is an all-knowing and almighty and omnipresent God. Let all humanity bow before him and acknowledge what he has done for our good and salvation. Yet only those who truly receive and accept what God has provided will benefit from it.

As regards election and the calling out, indeed the Lord's church as a whole, I would like to read a few scriptures from Exodus chapter 19, verses 3 to 6.

Exodus chapter 19, verses 3 to 6:

[3] ***And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;***

[4] ***Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.***

[5] ***Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:***

[6] ***And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.***

I believe it just as it is written here. I believe that the Lord God is a personal God. I believe this account 100%. He descended in fire upon Mount Sinai. He spoke to Moses. The whole congregation heard his voice and saw the fire and the smoke rising.

It is very important here that we recognize that God leads his own to himself in order to have fellowship with them. However, then he demands obedience to his instructions so that the covenant he has made with us may also be kept on our part and not broken.

[6] ***And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.***

And before that he said:

[5] ***Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people.***

It is indeed the case that the first act of disobedience brought about the first separation between God and man. And every act of disobedience towards God, that is towards his Word, actually separates us from God.

And we must come to terms with the idea that, as it is written, "***as obedient children of God***" [1Pe 1:14]…

There are indeed always two kinds of children, obedient and disobedient.

That is why the apostle Paul writes, "***conduct yourselves as obedient children***" of God.

God wants to make us obedient children in whom he takes delight, whom he can bless, whom he can trust, not those whom he must be angry with, whom he must discipline, but those whom he can truly bless and make a blessing.

In the New Testament, Peter took up this idea. He writes in 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9.

1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9:

[9] ***But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;***

[10] ***Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.***

Here it is no longer a people as a nation that is addressed, but the people of God, the redeemed flock. Just as God called out and chose a people from among all the other peoples in the Old Testament, so in the era of the New Testament and the New Covenant, he calls out a church from among all peoples, tongues, and nations. And this church forms the royal priesthood, is the holy people of the Almighty God, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb shed on the cross of Calvary.

Here we are told:

[10] ***Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.***

Only those who have already experienced this can speak of it. The beauty of God lies in the fact that he truly has in store for us the things promised in his Word. God is not a God who merely has the theory, but also the practice. We can have redemption, forgiveness, grace, salvation, and even union with God through faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Indeed, he transforms children of men into children of God.

This is what our Lord demands in John 3, "***unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.***" [Joh 3:3]

We attach great importance to the fact that the Gospel of Jesus Christ, our Lord, is proclaimed in this place in such a way that people may be saved if they believe God's message of salvation from the heart.

We do not wish merely to have preached, we wish to see again in God's glory those who have heard his Word from our lips.

Here we are told that the church of the living God is "***this royal priesthood, this holy nation, the people chosen as God's own possession to proclaim the virtues of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.***" [1Pe 2:9]

By nature, man, even if he becomes pious, is separated from God, walks the broad way that leads to destruction, and is in darkness.

But since Scripture teaches that we were "***dead in our sins and transgressions***" [Eph 2:1], that is indeed the tragedy of the whole matter. If man separated from God had not died spiritually in this state and lost all feeling until he is shaken awake by the Gospel to realize that he is indeed separated from God, for only then does the cry for grace, for forgiveness, and salvation begin.

To see this as true, we need only look at humanity as a whole. Separated from God, yet very religious. This is found in all religions. Everywhere people pray, everywhere sacrifices are offered, everywhere everything is done except what God would have us do.

And this is precisely what matters, that we allow ourselves to be placed within our God's plan of salvation.

What good is it if a Muslim believes that God will hold a judgment and even judge righteously? It is of no use at all. It is only then that it really matters when a person realizes that a judgment can do him no good at all.

We need grace before the judgment comes. And when we have received God's grace, then what our Lord said in John 5:24 is fulfilled, that through faith we have passed from death into life. We were separated from God, but we are no longer so, because we have accepted for ourselves by faith the reconciliation with God that took place in Christ, and the forgiveness that has been granted to us has indeed been made manifest in our life and "***His Spirit has borne witness to our spirit that we have become children of God.***" [Rom 8:16]

From Titus chapter 2, I would like to read, Titus chapter 2, verses 11 to 14, a passage well known to us all. Titus chapter 2, from verse 11:

[11] ***For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,***

[12] ***Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;***

[13] ***Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;***

[14] ***Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.***

[15] ***These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.***

The proclamation of the Gospel may initially provoke contempt until the listeners are seized by the power of the Gospel, by the power of God that accompanies the proclamation of the Gospel, and experience this power as redemption, as salvation. Only then can they rejoice and gratefully accept the proclamation.

There are passages in Holy Scripture, for example, when Stephen preached, they "***gnashed their teeth.***" [Act 7:54]

They were unable or unwilling to accept what was proclaimed to them.

As emphasized earlier, there have always been two groups: those who accept and those who reject. And only those who accepted what God had to give were blessed by him.

It is no different today. "***The grace of God has appeared to all men and brings them salvation***" [Tit 2:11], as we have read.

Yet the salvation that God has given us must be accepted in order to put an end to the misery in our lives.

Here it is written, "***teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.***" [Tit 2:12]

There are plenty of scriptures that describe what was before in the state of unbelief and what is revealed afterwards in the state of faith.

"***Let him who stole no longer steal***" [Eph 4:28], as we read very clearly in Ephesians chapter 4 and so on.

So there is a transformation in our lives, in our minds, in our hearts, throughout our lives. God reveals the power of salvation, of deliverance, of renewal, of the new birth, of the transformation of the whole person, right through to the complete redemption of our bodies and their transformation and rapture at the return of our beloved Lord and Saviour.

We have emphasized often enough that God will indeed finish the work he has begun.

In the same way we have emphasized, where something is to be completed, a beginning must first have been made.

The beginning with God can be for you this evening. But at some point, every person must know: on such and such a day, God made a start with me. He spoke to me through his Word, and I came to him and followed the call he gave.

In Revelation chapter 1, we read verses 5 and 6.

Revelation chapter 1, verses 5 and 6.

The man of God sends his greetings and then writes:

[5] ***And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,***

[6] ***And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.***

This is what we read here. Not "will make", but "has made".

How often have we emphasized and stressed this. From God's side, the redemption of all mankind has taken place once and for all. There has been only one day of atonement between God and mankind, and that took place there on the hill of Golgotha. There God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. [2Co 5:19]

Now it is up to each individual to accept this redemption and thus be born into God's plan, into the Lord's church.

For the Holy Scripture says, "***what is born of the flesh is flesh***" [Joh 3:6], and "***flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God***" [1Co 15:50].

"***But what is born of the Spirit is spirit.***" [Joh 3:6]

And then Paul writes to the Corinthians in chapter 15, the spiritual does not come first, but the natural.

Perhaps I shall read it so that we have the exact order and also the exact wording in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 45.

[45] ***And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.***

[46] ***Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.***

[47] ***The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.***

[48] ***As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.***

[49] ***And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.***

A work of God that is absolutely complete. And this Word too is yes and amen.

Just as we are all earthly beings in this body in which Adam and Eve once were, so too, when perfection comes, we shall have the resurrection body as our Lord and Saviour has.

We know this, especially all those who have been with us once or several times in Israel, particularly in Jerusalem. The greatest joy for a person who believes in the Bible is surely that moment when one stands before the hill of Golgotha, turns one's gaze slightly to the left and sees some distance away the tomb where Christ lay, and behold, the tomb is empty.

"***He is not here***", it says there so beautifully in English. "***He is not here: for he is risen***" [Mat 28:6].

"***You must not look for the living amongst the dead.***" [Luk 24:5]

He is risen.

And we all know Tersteegen's wonderful song, *Jesus lives, and so do I, Death, where are your terrors?*

We know that even the fear of death has been overcome because death itself has been overcome, and Jesus Christ rose on the third day.

As for those who have not yet seen and understood God's timing, they find it hard to believe because it is all taking so long. And we think here of the words that Peter addressed to the last generation in 2 Peter chapter 3.

2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 2:

[2] ***That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:***

[3] ***Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,***

[4] ***And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.***

Herein lies a major problem: people know nothing of God's reckoning of time. They may have heard at some point that "***one day with God is like a thousand years for us***" [2Pe 3:8], but they do not give it any further thought.

How grateful we can be that we in our generation are able to look back and see this divine division of time in the individual epochs from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Christ, and now another epoch of 2,000 years. And with that, the 6,000 years will soon be completed, and the seventh millennium will be the millennium. No one knows the day or the hour, nor is it necessary. But from the signs of the times, we can clearly see that we are now living in the last days.

This phrase too is found here in the text that has been read out. "***Knowing this first***", verse 3, "***knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days...***" [2Pe 3:3]

How often do we come across the phrase “at the end of days” or “in the end times” or “in the last days.” And we know that this refers to the period in which we are now living, and that is why we pay particular attention to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy in our own time.

All people can make mistakes, they can misjudge the times. Human beings are prone to overlook the very point at hand. But when we take God’s Word and it is strung together, transfigured by the Holy Spirit and pieced together like a mosaic, then it is not people who are making claims, but God who graciously gives us guidance through His Word.

And that is why Peter also writes, “***We have a more sure word of prophecy…***” [2Pe 1:19]

We have emphasized time and again in this place that it is simply essential for God to speak. Why do we read so many scriptures? For the sole reason that all who hear may simply know: God speaks to us Himself through His Word. We sit before Him and hear the words from His mouth, allowing them to be transfigured within us by the Holy Spirit.

I would like to read from Deuteronomy 4 and then also 7. Deuteronomy 4 verse 20, by way of comparison, Deuteronomy chapter 4 verse 20:

[20] ***But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.***

First they were to become it, and then they became it, then they were it. We were to be God’s children, now we are. We were to be God’s people, now we are God’s people. We were to be shown mercy, now we have been shown mercy. Everything that was promised to us by God has indeed become divine reality.

And this verse shows us that God fulfills what He has promised. “***To be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.***” [Deu 4:20]

I would like to read from Deuteronomy 7 verses 6 to 8.

[6] ***For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.***

[7] ***The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:***

[8] ***But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.***

When we hear and read these accounts, they touch our hearts. It is not the merit of any human being, but the grace of our God, which has been powerfully demonstrated to us. We are no better, indeed perhaps even worse, than other people. Here we have the same testimony to give as we find written in the Word of God.

Because God loved us: "***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.***" [Joh 3:16]

God has revealed His love for us through salvation. And whoever reciprocates this divine love accepts the salvation that has taken place by faith and is a saved person, a pardoned person, a redeemed person of the Lord.

As mentioned earlier, God has promised, and then He has created the means for all the promises, which are yea and amen, to be fulfilled in reality and to come true in the lives of those who have believed from the heart.

In Deuteronomy chapter 10, a few more verses, Deuteronomy chapter 10 from verse 14.

[14] ***Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.***

[15] ***Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.***

Now comes the most important point concerning election, verse 16.

[16] ***Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.***

[17] ***For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.***

How often do we read in Holy Scripture that with God there is no respect of persons. Here in this text, the circumcision of the heart, the renewal of the heart, is linked to election.

We know from well-known passages in the Holy Scriptures that it is possible to be led out, yet remain behind in one's heart. And that is why we read in the letter to the Hebrews, "***But they did not recognize my ways.***" [Heb 3:10]

A leading out and an election must lead to the renewal of the heart. The heart of stone must be taken from us and a heart that feels, a heart that can love, a heart that can forgive, a heart that is pleasing to God must be granted to us by grace.

We must not merely say that we are chosen, but also ensure that our heart can respond to this election with gratitude and that we can truly receive what has been graciously given to us by God.

You are all familiar, of course, with the passage from Hebrews 3 for example. Hebrews 3, the second part of verse 10 and then verses 11 and 12.

[10] ***...and they have not known my ways.***

[11] ***So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.***

[12] ***Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.***

[13] ***But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.***

It has simply been the case from the very beginning that the enemy has made things seem appealing and even said very elegantly, "***You will by no means die.***" [Gen 3:4]

Yet what God had said came to pass: "***On the day you eat of it you shall surely die.***" [Gen 2:17]

We said it earlier, the whole of humanity has been separated from God since Adam and Eve right up to the present day. Reconciliation with God took place on Golgotha. But it must be accepted and experienced; otherwise God's wrath and condemnation remain upon man.

And anyone who gives this some thought, indeed who ponders what it means to be eternally separated from God, will send a cry from their soul up to God. But only then, when we are shaken awake from this dead state in which we do not even realize that we are forever separated from God, through the proclamation of the Gospel, hence the term "revival".

When the Gospel is preached, people must be shaken awake, revival must come. And the moment a person who by nature is separated from God, and that includes all of us, realizes that they were born in sin and have lived in sin, the moment a person is shaken awake by the Gospel, they recognize their lost state, cry out for salvation from the depths of their soul and cry, "Lord, have mercy on me! Forgive all my guilt and sin; yes, be merciful to me, I'm a sinner."

A sinner is a person who does not believe God. Not a murderer, not a manslayer, not someone who has done who knows what. Rather Holy Scripture actually teaches us that we are all born in sin. And whoever persists in unbelief remains in sin, and that is why it is also said here in verse 12, Hebrews 3 verse 12:

[12] ***Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.***

What a blessing it is to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the message that sets us free and brings joy. What a privilege it is to be allowed to be under the sound of God's Word and to hear what God has to say and offer us.

And then there's the Word: "***Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.***" [Heb 3:15]

It pleased God to save those who believe in Him, our Lord and Saviour, through the folly of the message.

Paul said: "***to some the word of the cross is foolishness, to others it is the power of God.***" [1 Cor 1:18]

It will be one or the other for everyone. Either we take offense and do not believe, seeing it as folly, or we allow God's Word to speak to us, come to faith, accept it and experience the power of God that accompanies the proclamation of the Gospel.

Today what we read, I believe it was in Mark 7, may happen here. "***He has done all things well.***" [Mar 7:37]

He has healed the sick, He has forgiven sin, and He said, "***Whoever comes to me I will in no wise cast out.***" [Joh 6:37]

He will give peace and rest to our souls. He will do us good according to His great mercy and lovingkindness.

May He help us to truly belong to this great church of the living God, whom He has chosen as a holy people, as kings and priests who will be with Him forever.

To our God, who has done everything for us, and who even now in this final time of grace is sounding the last call, to Him be the thanks for the fact that He still speaks, that He still works, that He still calls us to Himself.

Blessed is the one who sets out today and comes to Him today, so that they may take God's grace as experienced with them on the journey ahead.

We read of the people of Israel: "***just as is the case today, you have become His own people.***"

May it be made manifest today that we have not merely heard the promise of becoming children of God or being His people, but that we might become so today in the presence of God.

And it is possible that we may experience God today in this very place. Praise be to His holy name. Amen.

Let us bow our heads, close our eyes and open our hearts. Perhaps there is someone here who would like to dedicate their life to the Lord. With every proclamation, the net is cast out, and it must also be hauled in.

The Lord said to Peter at that time, "***I will make you a fisher of men.***" [Mat 4:19]

The Lord sends His Word; He sends the proclamation of the Gospel to us. As I said just now: the net is cast. A catch is made. Who will allow themselves to be led to

the Lord? Who is ready to receive Him, to believe in Him without any ifs or buts?

Oh, how sad it is for those who are plagued by doubts, who would like to believe but cannot. Perhaps these doubts have been sown by those who themselves could not believe that the Bible is the Word of God.

But today, in the presence of the Lord, who is true and faithful, let us leave every doubt and all unbelief behind us and believe from the heart; believe in Jesus Christ, that He is our Saviour and that in Him reconciliation, yes, our reconciliation with God has taken place.

And that He gave His blood and life for the forgiveness of our guilt and sin.

That is why Peter writes, "***You have been redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of the spotless Lamb.***" [1Pe 1:18-19]

Beloved in the Lord. Dear friends. Brothers and sisters in Christ. We shall all have to appear before God, not only the righteous, not only those who have believed. On that day you will no longer be asked whether you believe in a last judgment or not. The dead will be raised.

In Revelation 20 we read: "***and death gave up the dead, and the sea gave up the dead.***" [Rev 20:13]

Everything gave up the dead and all had to appear before the judgment, before the white throne.

Dear friends, today we can find grace and escape that condemnation through faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

While all heads are bowed and all hearts are open, I would like to ask, as is sometimes done at evangelistic campaigns, whoever wishes to dedicate their life to God, please raise your hand briefly and then lower it again. Are there any such people among us? Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. God bless, thank you.

Let us sing together "Only Believe".

Only believe, only believe,

all things are possible, only believe.

Only believe, only believe,

all things are possible, only believe.

Jesus is here, Jesus is here,

all things are possible, for Jesus is here.

Jesus is here, Jesus is here,

all things are possible, for Jesus is here.

Faithful Lord, You have given the promise that You would be present where your people are gathered in your name. [Mat 18:20]

Beloved Lord, it has become manifest time and again that You have confirmed Your presence. You did not merely give the promise; You have fulfilled it time and again. You are present today too. We thank You for that. As Savior, as Healer, as the One who forgives all guilt, who blots out all sin, who has taken away the middle wall of partition [Eph 2:14] who brought reconciliation and forgiveness, and "***who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear son.***" [Col 1:13]

Faithful God, what a privilege it is to be gathered before Your face, to hear Your holy Word with reverence, to take it to heart and believe it, and then to experience its effect as the power of God, revealed in those who believe.

Beloved Lord, forgive us all our guilt, cover all our sins, Lord. Purify, sanctify, make us into people whose hearts and lives have been made new. According to the Scripture in 2 Corinthians 5:19, "***if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. The old is passed; behold, all things have become new.***" [2Co 5:17]

Beloved Lord and God, You will indeed create a new heaven and a new earth. You have already prepared a new Jerusalem.

And You are creating new people through the power of Your blood, Your Word, and Your Holy Spirit. Even now, at this very moment, the power of God is being revealed among us to all who believe with all their heart.

Lord, I thank You for this, for Your Word does not return void but accomplishes what you sent it to do. [Isa 55:11]

We thank You for everything, including this service which we have been able to spend in Your presence. Lift up your countenance upon us, O God, and grant us Your peace and Your blessing, in Jesus' holy name.

Amen.