

April 18, 2021

## GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

**This Week:** 9:30 a.m. Catechism Reading, 2:30 Student Slingerland.  
**No Classes.**

**Next Week:** 9:30 a.m. Reading Service, 6:30 p.m. Catechism Reading Service. Classes after the morning service.  
-All the Lord willing-

**Offerings Today:** 1<sup>st</sup> General Fund    Next week: 1<sup>st</sup> General Fund  
2<sup>nd</sup> Hudson Taylor    2<sup>nd</sup> Kingdom Boundaries\*  
\*see bulletin insert

### We Remember in Prayer:

- Mr. and Mrs. Jordan and Alyssa deWit, who were blessed yesterday with a healthy baby girl, Ellianna Rae. We give thanks for healthy mother and baby.
- Our widows, widowers and lonely ones, the unborn, prodigal sons and daughters, those undergoing treatments, and all those with hidden crosses.

## MEDITATION

### Empty Places (a dream) *(continued)*

Then another inhabitant of hell came and said: "I cause many men and women to believe that they are too weak to go to church. Some gave the excuse-when asked why they were not in church-they had a headache; others were nervous; some would get pain in their backs upon those hard uncomfortable benches, and so my fellow-helper knew how to help them fabricate falsities in order to furnish so called "lawful excuses" of their neglectfulness in church attendance. Of course, these same people do not think of staying home from work the next day; even if they should be half sick, they cannot stay home. But they could not go to church where they at least needed no special exertion of strength. They were capable for their work the following day, but I caused them to believe that they were too weak to go to church. I made them realize that if they could not work the next day it would be a loss to them. I made use of the mammon and the result was, they remained home and by degrees more and more."

"Well done," said the hellish prince with a devilish grin upon his face. "Sunday headaches would go away with coming into the fresh air and hearing something good in church, and backaches would be forgotten when the mind and heart were kept busy with higher, with heavenly things. But of course, sirs, it is self-evident that it is our duty not to inform them of these things; it would be very detrimental to us. We must use all means which are serviceable for us and do our best to keep places empty in the church and this will be the best way to increase our society in hell."

Encouraged by this address from the chief of the devils, another evil spirit appeared to relate his wicked practices and said: "I have a way of keeping people out of the church and it is this: I propose to this one and that one that it is high time to visit their brother or sister, neighbor or friend because it has been so long since they saw each other. Yes, they soon agree that such is the case, that it is not right, but when can they go? They cannot do it during the week. That is but natural because they cannot lose a day's pay; a wage-earner cannot do it, neither can a man of business for it is too unprofitable but Sunday, yes, that would be nice; we will then go and visit them. And now it is evident that the one who must be visited should know of it in order to be prepared. And oh yes, it is very obvious that they think, how nice, how pleasant it would be if our other brother, friend or neighbor also came. They give each other the hint and they too are invited. The neighbor or friend had plans to go to church, but ah, if they refuse, then they will offend the others and it is only for one time. If it had to be every Sunday, then it would be different, but now, yes, we will do it so that no one will be offended and to please someone else. So they come together; ask each other about their welfare; one or another has some news to tell and now they soon are ready to speak about anything except spiritual things. The women soon speak about clothing, food and drink, about other people but not in the spirit of love. The men talk about their business, what takes place in their daily work and the children enjoy themselves in their own way. They think it much more enjoyable than going to church or Sunday school. And this way many places remain empty in the church. "

"No matter," said Prince Satan, "what way you use, as long as you make places empty, but naturally, above all others in those churches where the truth is proclaimed and taught, for those are the strongholds of Prince Immanuel and you know, He is very strong where His servants are enrolled. Some of them are so far persuaded by Him that they would avoid going out openly in a train for pleasure, but to ride stealthily to a friend, therein they do not see so much wrong. And if they can be brought to that, they will soon go along on a pleasure trip and thus slowly they become accustomed to these things and before long they are ready for our service for good, in the week and on Sunday. "

Another devil said: "We should devise every means to keep as many people as possible at work during the hours of church time. "

"Ha! Ha!" said Beelzebub, "I have applied myself in doing this long ago. I saw the spirit of diligence and progress, and I have helped them by giving something of our strength into their hands. Just think of the advantage of our bicycles, automobiles, and places of amusement bring. What an excellent expedient for busy people to stay out of church and to go or ride to places of sinful pleasure and so-called recreation. Old and young, they all join together. Just note the multitudes who are kept out of churches."

Another said: "I am a devil of the weather and I go about in the congregation and its surroundings to convince people on the Sunday that it is going to rain or it is too cold or too warm, too damp or too muddy... according to the circumstances of the day... That in such

weather it is unfit to go to church, and many give ear to the suggestion without any contradiction. It is sufficient to cause your devilish majesty to roar with laughter, to see the same people going the following day through wind and weather, wearing raincoats and rubber over shoes, people who do not like to be seen on Sunday wearing raincoats and rubbers. The mammon-god, one of ourselves, has no objection but I tell them that going to church isn't worth so much effort and isn't becoming, and... They stay home... Empty places. "

"That is just what I want," said old Satan.

Now another devil comes with his plan, because they notice that the old gentleman is exceptionally delighted that his subjects are so skillful in causing the people to account their eternal salvation of such little worth. He says: "I am bent on making people over-busy on Saturday. The women in the house with washing, scrubbing, scouring, polishing, and putting things in order for Sunday. I caused the dressmaker to work hard so that the things her customers ordered would be ready for Sunday. She must work till midnight. And then I set myself upon causing many to forget something so that late on Saturday night they must go to this or that store to buy what they forgot. And this way the store keeper as well as his helpers are busy until midnight. I also bring neighbors together on Saturday nights; they sit together drinking coffee, smoking pipes, and talking until almost 12:00. Tomorrow it is Sunday anyway, and then they can sleep longer, but as you know, they can also oversleep and then it is a fine opportunity that they have slept too long and feel themselves completely out of sorts to go to church. And should they go, they are too sleepy to derive any benefit from going, while at the same time they give offense in distracting others by their sleepiness. And when they are in this condition, the minister most always preaches too long, or the sermon is too dry, and they show their impatience by constantly looking to see what time it is, for oh, they are so sleepy. Such a one never speaks well, not even of the best sermon, but just the opposite. Such people become excellent helpers for empty places in the church.

"They also help us to cause a certain class of people who would like to stay home if others would also do the same. For example: When by one or another circumstance, the minister is absent because of sickness or he must preach elsewhere, or whatever else it may be and an elder must lead the congregation, then I persuade them that it is only reading and they could just as well read a sermon at home themselves, for that would be just as good. Many listen to this and I carefully keep them from thinking how wrong they are and staying home and not going to the house of prayer with the congregation, to the assembly of prayer. And where they have read at home a good sermon which they regard as a God-spoken word to them, they forget that the sermon which the elder had read is the same and this elder has been called by the congregation, and thus by God himself, and as such he takes the place of the minister. However, you can easily understand that I do not reveal this to them, but they remain at home and I have my desire... Empty places."  
(... to be continued)

# Netherlands Reformed Congregation

Sioux Falls, SD



*Exalt the LORD our God, and  
worship at his holy hill; for the  
LORD our God is holy.  
Psalm 99:9*

Church Times: 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.