

# The Mission Paper of Zion

Father, Son and Holy Spirit |

Articles in English 2019 Autumn | **Siionin Lähetyislehti** 



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**Sionin Vähetyshetki**

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God is almighty. As the Almighty, God is the foundation of everything. He is present everywhere, sees all, knows all, is right-minded and perfectly good.

God has created all with His word. But the Creator's creation work is not limited to the beginning of life and the world. The world is not in the hands of a blind destiny. With His word, the Almighty continuously creates and maintains that which He has created.

## TRUSTING IN THE ALMIGHTY

We can not comprehend God's almightiness with human understanding. But in faith, we trust that God and His plans are behind everything. Faith brings forth trust in God as the Father who leads life and whose care we can resort in.

Trust in God's almightiness may waver if we run into difficulties, suffering or evil in our lives. Or when life does not go as a person would wish. Or when it feels as though one self knows the meaning and purpose of their own lives better than God does.

The almighty God's wisdom and will are kept secret from people, and often

# Father – Creator

in the face of trials one must humbly and quietly be satisfied with the words Jesus taught: “Your will be done”.

God also tested Job from the Bible, who in the end rebelled against His will. Then God reminded Job of His almighty iness.

## THE LORD OF LIFE AND DEATH

God’s almightiness also includes His power as the Lord of life and death. God’s creation work is perfectly holy. Man does not have the right to take birth and death into his own control. Man can only try to honor and protect life. The Bible often reminds us of life’s perishability and death.

Its intent is not to scare or vaunt power, which God most powerfully shows in birth and death. God’s word’s task is to remind people that life cannot be depended on, because it is perishable and is taken away from us in death.

## FATHER’S GOODNESS

Can the almighty and good God exist, if evil happens in the world? As the Almighty, God is not a tyrant or terror who rules with fear and violence. God

is righteous; in other words a right-minded and good Father. But God does allow suffering to happen in the world.

Luther calls it God’s “strange” work. With this work He humbles people, undresses them of their power and guides them to resort in Christ.

Peter writes: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:6-7)

Faith gives the strength to see that God’s work in the world is good despite the trials of life. The continuation of life, care for loved ones, peace and joy are examples of God’s influence in creation. □

Text: Antti Koivisto

This article is published in the book “Uskon aakkosia” SRK 2012.

Tranlaction: Angela Hänninen

# Christ as the Redeemer

**G**od created the world and all was well. The situation changed when the enemy of souls tempted Eve in to taking fruit from the tree of good and evil. The woman did not have the strength to resist the temptation. Instead she took the fruit and ate it. Then she gave it to her husband and he ate it also.

God called the fallen ones and spoke to them. The Lord cursed the snake and put enmity between the seed of the snake and seed of the wife. At the same time, God informed that the wife's seed would crush the head of the snake.

This was the promise of salvation and redemption of which the Father and Son had spoken about from the beginning of time: "You are my son; today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession." (Ps. 2:7-8). The son willingly promised to fulfill the Father's will (Ps. 40:9).

In the falling, God's image in man was corrupted and man found favor in evil. He did not love God, only himself and the world. The Apostle Paul states that there is no good in him, because sin lives in his flesh and blood.

Many people have searched for peace in their conscience without understanding that man is saved only through faith, grace and Jesus Christ. Without this understanding, they may have searched for the gracious God through their own work, prayer, reading the Bible or practicing good deeds.

## ONLY THROUGH CHRIST

The heavenly Father's love, God's grace and living faith are inseparably connected to Jesus, who is our salvation. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5:19).

God's grace approaches man through the pardoned sinner or preacher of the Holy Spirit. The sin-distressed one is directed to the redeemer of all sins: Jesus. In the preaching of the gospel, God bestows faith with which He cleanses the heart. The servants, believing people, put on the finest clothing of the begotten child. It is the wedding garment, righteousness, which Jesus has prepared for every person.

## WE WATCH IN FAITH

Jesus' birth is the largest event in the history of the world. But it is even more than that. If Jesus hadn't been born, no person would obtain everlasting life. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6:23).

The prophets' predictions of the Messiah came true literally in the birth of the Redeemer on the first Christmas, in his public work, in suffering on Good Friday and dying on the cross, and in the victorious resurrection and ascension into heaven.

The New Testament children of God wait in faith, watching, for that day when Jesus will come a second time to Earth. Then he will not redeem anyone anymore. Then he will give each one their fair judgement.. The Father's blessed ones will be called to everlasting glory in heaven, but the cursed ones will end up in eternal damnation. Only God knows when the last day will come.

## BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY

God had chosen the virgin Mary to mother His own son. The angel told the young Mary: "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call

him Jesus. The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:31,35).

The believer Josef, who had secretly planned to abandon his pregnant fiancée, received a message from the angel: "Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1:20-21).

Many deny that Jesus was born of a virgin. Man's reason cannot comprehend the mystery of faith. Faith opens up understanding. God's Son was without sin, holy and pure from the time of conception. Jesus Christ's redemption work covers the whole life of a person: from the beginning moments in the mother's womb to the last moment before death. Life is a unique miracle and gift from God, for which man is responsible to this giver of life.

## JESUS REDEEMED OUR SINS

On Good Friday, Jesus Christ was before God and cried out in pain: "My God, my God, why have you forsak-

en me?” With his last words the Redeemer said: “It is fulfilled.” With love for all people, Jesus suffered, died on the cross, shed his blood and fulfilled on their behalf God’s demanding law. Without the shedding of blood there is not forgiveness of sins.

Paul taught the Galatians: “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.” (Gal. 4:4-5).

God encouraged his own already through Isaiah: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.” (Isa. 43:1-2).

On the third day Jesus arose from the dead to make us righteous. Through the resurrection he won over the power of sin and death. In this way Jesus made us acceptable to God and opened the way to heaven to those who believe the word of salvation.

Pekka Tervo

Translation: Angela Hänninen

Published: Vuosikirja Tulevaisuuteen ja toivoon, SRK 2000. This text is shortened.





# The Holy Spirit

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” Trusting in this promise, we often gather to listen to the word of God and its explanations. The promise is great, but how is it possible?

Jesus has ascended into heaven and is now sitting on the right hand of God. We cannot see or hear Him with our natural senses. Yet, He is among us. This is possible only because He is present in the midst of His kingdom in the word and sacraments through the Holy Spirit.

The disciples were given the task of bringing the message of Jesus into all the world. This is a great and demanding task: all nations are to be made disciples of Jesus and they are to be baptized and taught to obey Jesus’s teachings. It was an impossible task for the human strength of the disciples. The group of disciples gathered behind locked doors were captives of fear.

The disciples were convinced and received new strength from the appearances of the resurrected Jesus: when Jesus arose from the grave of death, he appeared to His disciples and taught them to know the kingdom of God. Jesus promised that the disciples would

not be left alone. They would not be orphans in the world. They would receive the Holy Spirit as armor in their work.

## **The Holy Spirit gives birth to faith**

The Holy Spirit is God’s third person. Each person of the triune God has its own important task.

Ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in a way that they could see with their natural senses. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak what the spirit gave them to speak (Acts 2:1–13). We remember this event every Pentecost. The period of time from the first Pentecost to the last judgement is called the time of the Holy Spirit.

God’s Holy Spirit gave the first disciples the power, will, and boldness to proclaim the gospel as Jesus had taught. Jesus’s work on this earth continues as the work of the Holy Spirit.

On the first Pentecost, 3000 people affected by Peter’s sermon were pricked in their conscience. They believed the gospel and received the grace of repentance. The Holy Spirit gave birth to faith in the hearers.

The prophets' promise of a new covenant and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled. God's signs were in heaven and on earth. Mount Zion was a refuge, and those who God called were saved (Jer 31:31–34; Joel 3:1–5).

### **Faith and its fruits**

The miracle of the birth of faith can also happen today. A person who is separated from God can return to become a child of God. God calls an unbelieving person to faith, the grace of repentance, and into the kingdom of God through the sermon of repentance preached in the kingdom of God.

When a person receives the message of joy of God's kingdom—the gospel of forgiveness of sins of Jesus—that person becomes a citizen of God's kingdom. He or she becomes a partaker of all of God's good gifts, which Jesus has earned with His innocent life, suffering, and death. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ as the only righteousness. A person who has received the grace of repentance is righteous – acceptable to God.

Faith is not born by one's own reason or power. Our mind cannot comprehend God nor the mysteries of God's kingdom. The Holy Spirit calls man to be with God by the gospel, gives birth to faith, and encourages a person to preserve faith and a good conscience.

In addition to the gift of faith, the Holy Spirit also gives other gifts. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22–26).

The most precious gift is love. With the gifts of the Holy Spirit it is possible to be victorious over the accomplishments of the flesh – all kinds of uncleanness. The Holy Spirit helps and guides a person to have such a will and understanding where sin is seen as sin and grace as grace. This is a question of the work of the Holy Spirit and the state of the heart. This work of the Holy Spirit is called sanctification. Grace teaches a person to reject sin and to live in such a way that the will of God is realized. This way of life, this will, this battle against sin and its powers is called the Christian's endeavor.

### **The priesthood of the Holy Spirit**

Every believer has the right, the possibility, and the obligation to tell about Jesus. A believing person is a priest of the Holy Spirit.

The task given by Jesus is precious: with the power of the Holy Spirit we preach the forgiveness of sins with the authority that Jesus has given. The Father sent Him and He sent us.

“The one who hears you hears me,” our resurrected Lord states (Luk 10:16). Whoever hears the remission of sins



proclaimed by a believer who has received the gift of the Holy Spirit does not hear just the voice of a human, but rather the call of Jesus himself. This is then God's call.

The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, and enlightens. The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth leads a person to the light of

God's word, and as the Spirit of grace comforts and forgives sins, will one day awaken us from the grave of death, and will give us everlasting life.

Text: Mauno Soronen

Published in the book *Uskon aakkosia*, SRK 2012

Translation: K.K.



# Greetings from the children in Kenya!

**T**he last few kilometers of the ride to the location of the services are bumpy. The children in the yard notice us and run to greet us. The older children can speak English well. An interpreter helps us visit with the rest – everyone is able to greet and say their name without an interpreter.

**We are on a mission trip** in Kenya, Africa. We hold the first services in the **Sidwaka** home in Bumala.

**Emmanuel Ametsife** keeps the first sermon. He came on this mission trip from another African country, Togo. At the services the children sit on bamboo mats on the floor. Although the circumstances are different, God's word and the gospel are exactly the same as in Finland and everywhere else in the world.

**After the services Miika Koppero-inen** relates greetings from Finland. The children are amazed at the photos of winter snow and freezing weather. The difference in temperature between Finland and Kenya is nearly 50 degrees.

In the yard after the services we try playing the Finnish national sport called pesäpallo. During the game the ball made from a bag of leaves gets stuck in a tree. Luckily we are able to get it down before we leave.

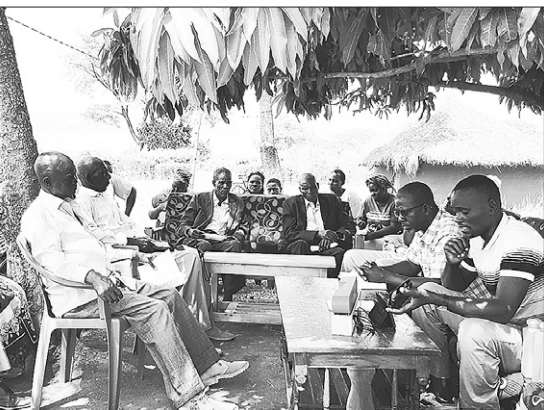
**At the end of the mission trip** we hold services in Nairobi. We hold a Sunday school lesson during the first sermon—the topic is Daniel in a den of lions.

The children independently read the opening and closing prayers and actively answer the questions. They raise their hand to get a turn to speak and stand up while they are speaking—just like Finnish children used to do in school.

As we leave to return home we promise to convey the Kenyan children's greetings to Sunday school children and all children of their age in Finland.

## RAEL RAN TO THE SERVICES

**Rael Atieno Owino** is an 8-year-old girl. She lives on the shore of Lake Kanyaboli in Kenya, Africa. She attends services and



Sunday school. She thinks Bible stories and Sunday school pictures are the best part of Sunday school.

Rael has come home from school for lunch. The school is 3–4 kilometers away. When we wondered how she was able to come home for lunch and then return to school during the lunchbreak, Rael and her siblings showed us how fast they run home from school. □

Text: Jouni Hintikka

Published in the Lasten Polku paper 4/2019.

Translation: K.K.

### School in Kenya:

In Kenya children go to preschool already at 3–4 years of age. They start elementary school at the age of 6.

The children are taught in English and Swahili.

The school year has three semesters. The children wear school uniforms. There is no free lunch.





# Jesus' life course.

## Photo essay of Israel

Text: Pekka Kyllönen

Translation: S-L.L.

### BETHLEHEM

Shepherds were tending their sheep on the fields on Christmas night. Angels came down from heaven and proclaimed Jesus' birth. The shepherds were frightened, but obediently went to see what had happened. They found Mary, Joseph and the baby, who slept in a manger.



### NAZARETH

Jesus' home was in Nazareth. The Church of Annunciation commemorates the place where an angel appeared to Mary and told her about the birth of her future child. On the door to the church a series of pictures illustrate the stages of Jesus' life. Inside there is the grotto that served as the home of the holy family. Grottoes are cooler to live in during the hot summers of Israel. Jesus "grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him" (Luke 2:39). This church is the largest Christian church in Middle East.



## JORDAN

Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River. After the baptism He started His public activity. The part of the river shown here is close to Lake Gennesaret. People are baptized there even today. Jesus was baptized closer to the Dead Sea, near the Jordan border.

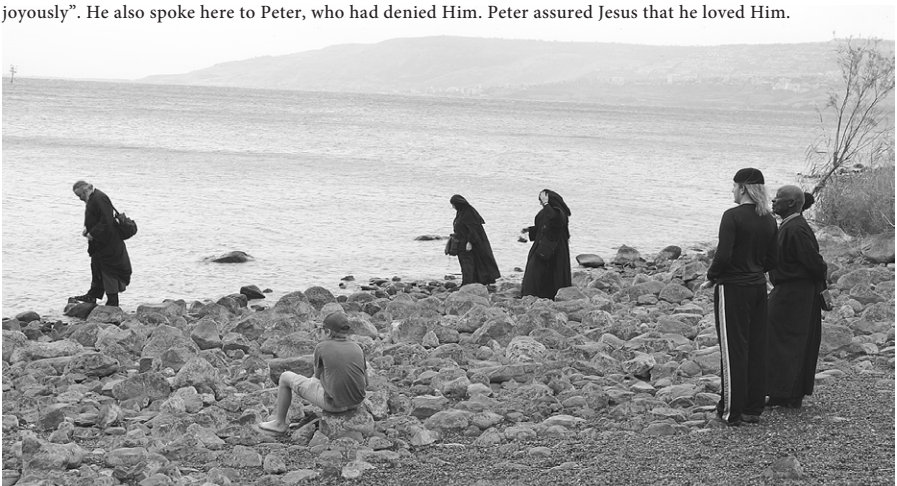


## CAPERNAUM

Capernaum is located by Lake Gennesaret. The picture shows some ruins of old Capernaum and a new Catholic church built on pillars. The church has been built at the site of Peter's home. Jesus usually stayed there when He traveled in the Galilee area, preaching and teaching. In that home Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law and performed other miracles.

## GENNESARET

Lake Gennesaret is in Galilee. It is a fresh water lake, where people still fish. On this lake Jesus calmed the storm, and on its shore He taught people. He spoke from a boat to the crowd of people gathered on the shore. The picture shows the place where He was "frying fish upon the embers, breaking bread so joyously". He also spoke here to Peter, who had denied Him. Peter assured Jesus that he loved Him.



## THE MOUNTAIN OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The high lakeside promontory offers a magnificent view over Lake Gennesaret. It was here that Jesus kept his well-known speech, Sermon on the Mount. He spoke about blessedness and exhorted people to find first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. There is also a view of the Valley of the Doves. The patriarchs already traveled through this valley, which was also part of the eastern trading route, Via Maris.



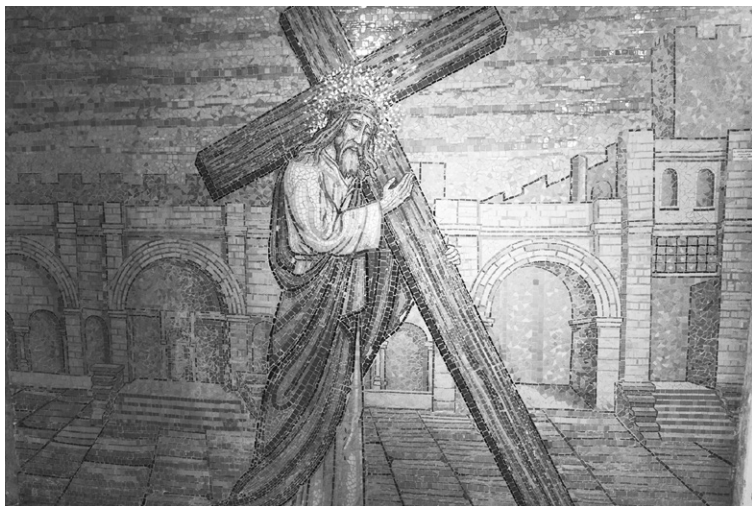
## GETHSEMANE

The garden of Gethsemane is located in the Kidron Valley on the slope of the Mount of Olives. Jesus went there to pray with His disciples on the day preceding His death. The disciples were tired and slept. Jesus was captured and taken away for questioning. Peter followed Jesus as far as the coal fires on the priest's courtyard. Some of the old olive trees under which Jesus prayed are still in Gethsemane.



## LITOSTROTON

Pontius Pilate interrogated Jesus and handed Him over to the people to be crucified. The street level of Jerusalem at that time was several meters below the current street level. The mosaic shown in the picture marks the place where Jesus was condemned to death. Jesus was given a heavy cross, which He carried toward the hill of Golgotha.







## VIA DOLOROSA

Jesus walked along Via Dolorosa, carrying His cross. Via Dolorosa is about 1.5 km long. There are 14 stations on the way, which stand for events that took place during Jesus' journey to Golgotha as related in the gospels and the Christian tradition. The winding road passes along the narrow lanes of Jerusalem's Old Town. The road is currently lined by shops and various modern activities.

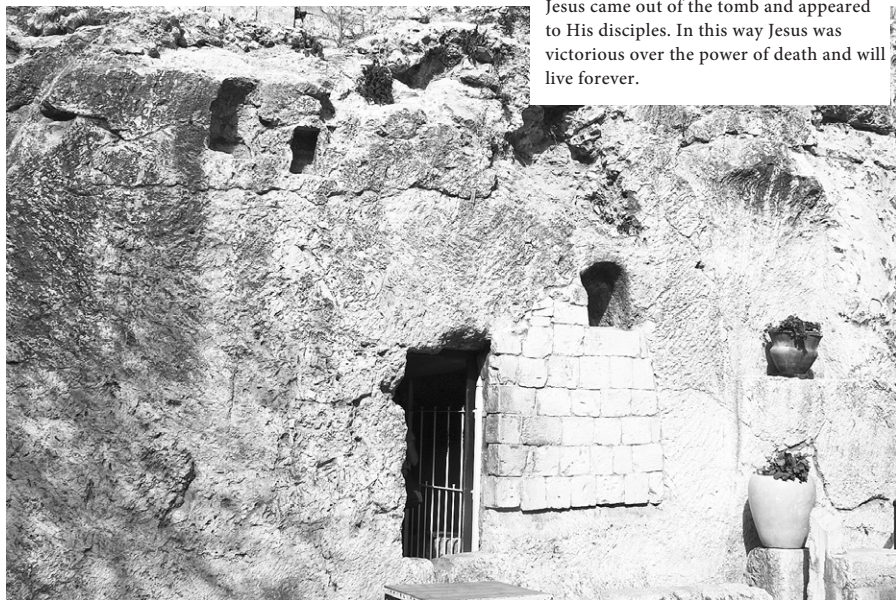


## GOLGOTHA

The hill of Golgotha is close to the wall of Jerusalem's Old Town. The cross was erected on the hill, and Jesus was crucified. The blood that flowed from His wounds atoned for our sins. There is now a cemetery on top of the hill.

## GARDEN TOMB

Jesus died on Golgotha. At the foot on the hill there is a tomb cut in the rock, which is called the Garden Tomb. Jesus' body was carried there, and the tomb was closed with a large piece of rock. On Easter morning Jesus came out of the tomb and appeared to His disciples. In this way Jesus was victorious over the power of death and will live forever.



# My second birth is crystal clear in my mind

**Sergei Gerasimov** is a Russian vicar from Primorsk. He received the grace of repentance during a confirmation camp for Russian believers in Jämsä.

– My wife was a believer before I was, and she asked me to come to services, where I heard the living word of God preached. I had attended a Lutheran church even before that, but I did not find living faith there. In Jämsä they preached my sins forgiven.

Receiving the grace of repentance was a momentous experience.

– I thought: this is the moment of my second birth. I remember the date: June 9, 1997.

Gerasimov has been endeavoring as a member of God's kingdom ever since. The three Gerasimov children are also believing.

## JOY FOR THOSE WHO REPENT

The vicar tells us about his workday:

– In the morning I come to the church. I start by perusing financial matters. Then I read the Bible and prepare for the service.

We have two services a week. There are 25 members in our congregation, but people from elsewhere also attend our services.

– I call others to come, too. Gerasimov is happy that all members of his congregation have repented.

## MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO GO TO SERVICES

Sergei Gerasimov is also asked to keep services for believers at Primorsk, Vyborg and Sovetski. Services are kept both in homes and in churches.

– Russian believers communicate actively with each other. They often visit their believing friends even when there are no services.

SRK arranges mission services actively in Russia: In 2019 Finnish mission speakers make 29 trips to different parts of the country. During each trip services are kept in several localities.

– Fall services are a major event for Russian believers. They have a heartfelt desire to come to those services. They have good possibilities to hear God's



word and to meet Finnish believers there, Gerasimov points out.

### **EASTERN ORTHODOX COUNTRY**

Eastern Orthodox faith is the prevalent religion in Russia. The Ingrian Lutheran Church is more than 400 years old. It has about 15 000 members in different parts of the country. According to Gerasimov, the Lutheran and Orthodox churches have a good neighborly relationship.

– Those who do not believe, only come to church on the big church holidays. They have no longing for God's word.

### **SACRIFICE FOR MY SINS**

When discussing prayer, Gerasimov says that the Lord's Prayer helps him and teaches him how to pray in the right way. He defines trinity briefly like this:

– God is the Father. Jesus is the Son and our personal Savior. Sacrifice for my sins. The Holy Spirit is a helper, given by God and the Son.

Text: Päivi Martikainen  
Translation: S.-L.L.

# Remember me!

When people say goodbye, they often also say: "Remember me when you pray to the Heavenly Father." Or simply: "Remember me." I have thought that this request is not merely a beautiful phrase. It is the petition of a poor Christian that I would pray on his or her behalf. For a person who makes this request the most important thing is to remain believing and to get into heaven.

I remember a good acquaintance with whom we sometimes discussed the most important matters of life. He had the painful memory of having given up his personal faith. He never told me exactly why he had denied his faith. He only said: "You know how it goes, sin takes away faith from the heart." I told him: "But you can believe your sins forgiven. I would be happy to preach you the gospel in Jesus name and blood." "Yes, I know, but not now. Yet I am sure I will repent some day." Our discussions of faith usually ended at this statement. But it was sad that the "some day" for repentance never came. I recalled these words of his when I heard about his death.

I also remember another person, who said to me: "You know, I have promised to God that I will not give up

this faith". My response to this very confident statement was: "Let us not make any firm promises. We are only weak Christians. But if God so wills, we have a desire to believe and get into heaven."

Faith is a positive thing that bestows beautiful experiences to our lives. The apostle lists the fruits of faith as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control. Would not we all hope to have these qualities in our temporal lives? But we cannot gain them on our own. They are gifts of God. And these fruits of faith, which we do not find ourselves possessing, are not the only thing God gives us. He also gives us eternal life.

The world sets high standards for faith. The believer should be perfect. He should not fall or do anything immoral. The fall of a believing person is mega news, often used to support the claim that faith does not really help us. Falls and sins are sad matters, and even believers may fall. If I were a perfect person, I would not need grace, forgiveness of sins or faith. The weak one finds security in God, as the psalm writer says: "In you, Lord my God, I put my trust. I trust in you" (Ps. 25:1-2).

When we rely on our own strength, we feel in control of both our temporal

lives and eternal life. We decide when we need to repent and what our future will be like. But ultimately, we are not able to control our lives. Even our best efforts turn out catastrophic. The wages of sin is death. Apostle Paul writes: "It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy." (Rom. 9:16).

When I talked to my father about repentance and faith, he used to say: "I will believe if God shows me even a single miracle." I listed to him many of God's miracles, but they were not enough to convince him. My words seemed to irritate him rather than establish good rapport. I therefore avoided speaking to him about faith any more.

But although I did not speak, God worked in him. Through illness He prepared him to experience the greatest of all miracles, personal acceptance of God's grace. My mother called me to come and see my bed-ridden father. When I talked to him about temporal matters, he said: "I am not interested in all that any more". I was astonished and asked: "Are you interested faith then?" "Yes", he answered. It was a joyous moment when I was able to preach him all sins forgiven in Jesus' name and blood. Tears turned into joy. We both felt miraculous peace in our hearts. I hugged my father, who seemed dearer to me than ever before. That situation

strongly reminded me of Paul's words: "Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy..." (Rom. 9:18).

On both sides of Jesus' cross were criminals condemned to death because of their crimes. One of them joined the people who ridiculed Jesus, asking for a "miracle": "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" (Luke 23:39) But the heart of the other criminal had opened when he had heard Jesus speak to His Father and pray to Him on behalf of His tormentors. He turned to Jesus and asked: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Jesus heard his request and helped him: "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43).

Every believer is a child of God and an inhabitant of God's kingdom. Like the psalm writer, we pray to our Heavenly Father: "Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old." (Ps. 25:6) We feel strong fellowship with our believing escorts and pray with the words of a song of zion: "We travel homeward, praying for all our friends in faith, that once we'll be together before our Savior's face." (SZ 218:2).

Text: Olavi Vallivaara

Published in the online version of Päivämies, 9.6.2019





### **The Lord's Prayer**

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 trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil,  
for Thine is the kingdom and  
the power and the glory,  
forever and ever.  
Amen.