

The Mission Paper of Zion

Siionin Vähetykslehti  **ARTICLES IN ENGLISH 2022 SPRING**



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Keeping the Sabbath day holy

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A background image featuring a branch with pink and white flowers in the upper left and a white cup filled with coffee in the lower left.

It is good to stop and rest

TEXT: TEEMU KARHUMAA

TRANSLATION: BEN AHO


As a child, it may have been scary thinking that the Heavenly Father sees everywhere, even if you would go hide in a dark bedroom. This may be particularly true when one feels in their conscience that they have done wrong, and their conscience is reminding them.

In the New Testament letters of Paul and Peter there are instructions to the believing recipients. These instructions for life are still a firm basis for a believer's life today.

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“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:11-2).

Faith instills a desire to live according to the Bible and the instructions of the Holy Spirit, but our own flesh causes us to fall into sin often. The enemy of souls entices us into sin and says, ‘You can repent of it later.’

A child of God, nonetheless, does not need to live in fear because we have not been able to live a life without falling into sin. We have a gracious Father in heaven. God gives strength and a desire to strive in life according to His word. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13).

The corona pandemic has caused many of us to stop and ask what is important in life. Many have had a busy life while others may have had more time with those close to them.

Our society has continually become busier in these last years.

The Bible teaches to sanctify the Sabbath day. Even in a temporal sense a person needs rest and relaxation. Above all, we need to pause around God’s word. The day of rest, Sunday, gives us this excellent opportunity, if we do not fill it with hobbies and running around.

Nowadays, when everything is relative and many previously revered values are forgotten, a person may experience insecurity and a lack of purpose. The world changes rapidly and often one does not know what

can be believed and trusted. God’s Word gives a strong and unchanging security in life.

Do we live as believers, that we would be eye pleasers? Do we behave differently in the fellowship of believers than we do when amid unbelievers? Grace does not teach us to live judging one another’s actions. However, love constrains us to help if we see that someone is having



A child of God, nonetheless, does not need to live in fear

difficulties. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness” (Col 3:12-14).

The Lord himself comes and breaks the bread; we see the bloody wounds in his hands. He blesses us in his Kingdom. This encourages and helps us to endure. We reflect, life is but a shadow. Our destination awaits in Heaven. From the midst of this life's storms, we anticipate eternal spring (Finnish Song of Zion 367:4-5). ■

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Third commandment:

Thou shalt sanctify the holy day

**THOU SHALT SANCTIFY THE
HOLY DAY. WHAT DOES IT
MEAN?**

**Response: We should fear and
love God so that we do not
despise preaching and His
Word, but hold it sacred and
gladly hear and learn it.**

THE TEXT WAS PUBLISHED THE SMALL
CATECHISM BY MARTIN LUTHER.

TRANSLATION: SIRU

God has given man both work and rest. Rest is more than merely sleep and physical rest. The most profound purpose of the day of rest is to pause before God.

In silence we can sense the presence of holiness, although we are unable to give it a name or define its form. Our own defectiveness and the conflicts of our lives make us pose questions and force us to search answers.

Holy God wants to respond to us. Through His word He comes into our world and speaks in our language. If we refuse to listen to God, we exclude Him from our lives.

The Sunday service is a meeting place where God Himself speaks to us and we speak to Him. The holy word of the Bible teaches us what God says to us and how He answers to our prayers.

Another purpose of keeping Sunday separate from the other days is to remind us that we all need a day of rest together. It is God's good will to give everybody a day to rest.

- ◆ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Ex. 20:11)
- ◆ If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord. (Isa. 58:13–14)
- ◆ Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath". (Mark 2:27–28)
- ◆ He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. (Luke 4:16)



The day of rest is ordained by God

TEXT: KEIJO NISSILÄ
TRANSLATION: BEN AHO

The third of ten commandments is a command to sanctify the sabbath day.

The commandment is presented in the Old Testament in two places. The first situation highlights God as a Creator (Ex. 20:1-17). Having created heavens, earth and seas in six days, God rested on the seventh day and sanctified it.

The seventh day, the sabbath day, was the culmination of the creation

work. God set aside this day from other days as a day of rest for himself. Man, created in the image of God, is to sanctify this day to the Creator and remember to honor it every week. The person that sanctifies the sabbath day follows the example of his Creator and reflects God's pattern in creation.

There is a natural need for rest

The second basis for the sabbath command (Deut. 5:12-15) comprises social ethics and salvation history. The basis upon social ethics arise from a person's natural need for rest

after an arduous work week. “that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou” (Deut. 5:14).

The commandment was revolutionary in social life. It created equality one day a week when free people and slaves together could enjoy the sabbath’s offering of rest from labor. This perspective slowly opened roads to the abolishment of slavery.

The meaning of the sabbath

The sabbath’s salvation history basis is founded in the commandment’s leading to an image of a God who led his people from Egyptian bondage. The sabbath’s specific purpose was to remember the freedom God had granted his people. The events of salvation history were experienced as true happenings when they were recalled on the Sabbath day. When one’s own daily pressures were able to be put aside, then there was found time to remember God’s great salvation history.

According to Martin Luther, the third commandment exhorts one to both rest and to sanctify the day of rest. Spending the day in rest fulfills the law of nature requiring rest to counterbalance the pressures of work. Nonetheless, the sabbath day’s chief intent is not to give rest and it should

not be “so strictly interpreted as to forbid any other incidental work that cannot be avoided” (Large Catechism: 86).

The primary objective of the sabbath is that we would sanctify it. In other words, we would separate ourselves from daily toils and turn to the worship of God (Large Catechism: 84). The sanctification of the sabbath day means a spiritual rest, that “we would allow God alone to work in us” (Speech on good works: 91).

In the hearing of God’s word

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave a good example when he went, as was his habit, into the synagogue on the sabbath day to worship. Sanctification of the sabbath happens when we endeavor to come to the hearing of God’s word. “God comes into this world through his word and speaks our language. Unless we desire to hear God, we shut him out of our lives (Catechism).

People tend to forget God and focus on their own concerns. Therefore, the commandment contains, “Remember to sanctify the Sabbath day!” Prophet Isaiah needed to remind: “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the →

sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord” (Is. 58:13-14).

Pausing for spiritual rest

The sabbath or sanctifying the seventh day expanded in Israel’s history to a celebration of a sabbath year and a year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25). For six years, one could sow and harvest their fields. The seventh year was a year of rest for the land, a sabbath year. The land would not be sown but the produce which grew by itself was enjoyed. The land recovered and rested. In addition to the sabbath year there was also the year of Jubilee. It was celebrated on the fiftieth year after seven weeks of years (7 times 7 years).


The spiritual rest attained with hearing and studying God’s word on

the sabbath is, according to Martin Luther, a mysterious condition, which is comparable to Christ’s rest in the grave. He promised the thief that was crucified with him, “Verily I say unto thee, Today thou shalt be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).

The rest of God’s people

Christ has sanctified the grave to be a sweet resting place for the believers. According to the book of Hebrews, this rest awaits God’s children when toilsome days on this earth are fulfilled. “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his” (Heb. 4:9-10).

When we remember to sanctify the sabbath we can smell the fragrance of paradise in the hearing of God’s word. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is” (Heb. 10:25). ■



Good works are fitting on the sabbath

TIMO LIIKANEN

TRANSLATION: BEN AHO

The day of rest, the sabbath, brings us beside matters that are the most important.

In recent years, many have added to their customary greeting to me, ‘keep healthy.’ The words are meaningful considering the current corona epidemic. It is important that we remember one another in this way.

Health is one of those things which we can erroneously take for granted when there are no problems. Sickness, however, can come unexpectedly. People can thank God for this that through modern health care, many sicknesses which previously were incurable can now be treated.



After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The impotent man answered him, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me."

Sickness is not punishment

In Jesus' time, the life of a sick person was very different. Health care had not yet developed. Sick individuals were isolated from both secular and religious life.

In sickness, a person could be consumed with thoughts that their condition is a consequence of sin. This thought was revealed in the conversations of Jesus' disciples.

In John's gospel, the 9th chapter, the disciples asked about the blind man, "And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind" (John 9:2)?

Jesus desired to direct their thoughts this way, that life and health are God's gifts, and the works of

God are manifest through different people. Jesus said, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:3). Diversity speaks of God's remarkable creation work. When God has given good health, we may thank him for it.

Man at the pool of Bethesda

Next Sunday's Gospel text talks about a man who had been ill for 38 years (John 5:5). He waited besides the pool of Bethesda waiting for his miraculous healing.

Certain Bible handbooks tell how an angel would descend from time to time and stir the waters of the pool. Immediately after, the first person into the pool would be healed from

Jesus saith unto him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked:

and on the same day was the sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, "It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed." He answered them, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk." Then asked they him, "What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?" And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.

The sabbath is sanctified, above all, in the hearing and study of God's word.

whatever sickness they had (John 5:4).

This miraculous healing did not happen to the man in our text, and he did not believe it would ever be possible. This was evident from his response when Jesus asked him whether he wanted to become well: "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool" (John 5:7).

The man was able to experience a miraculous healing – not in the water of the pool, but through the words of Jesus. God's son had power and authority to perform miracles and to heal. We can imagine the feelings of thankfulness and joy that the man felt. In an actual sense, as well as in a spiritual sense, he was able to rise and walk in this life. The man walked away on his own and went to share what he had seen and experienced (John 5:15).

Jesus is Lord of the sabbath

We are reminded in the third commandment of the importance of sanctifying the sabbath day. It is good that one day a week is set aside to pause besides those matters that are most important and to rest from →

toils of the work week. Every Sunday reminds us of Christ's resurrection.

The sabbath is sanctified, above all, in the hearing and study of God's word. It is important to pause and rest.

The Jews had strict sabbath rules, which the pious of that time tried to follow as closely as possible. Some of the rules, however, contradicted themselves.

Jesus and the man he healed were able to experience this. According to the sabbath rules, carrying any item was strictly forbidden (Neh. 13:19). The Jews reprimanded the man for this.

They began to revile Jesus because he had healed on the sabbath (John 6:10, 16). In another situation, visiting around this same topic of dissension – healing on the sabbath – Jesus answered his critics: “What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay

hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days” (Math. 12:11-12). Jesus showed by his word that he is the Lord of the sabbath. Sunday, the day of rest, is for people. It is a gift of God.

Faith cometh through hearing Christ's word

The many miraculous works of Jesus invited people to believe upon him. This is how it happened to the man who had laid beside the pool of Bethesda. Jesus words begat faith. Paul writes of this to the Romans: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

The Lord has given his people a duty to proclaim his word of salvation to all nations (Math. 28:18-20). The Gospel work continues with the power of the Holy Spirit. ■



**Kesti family
in Texas.**

**Elsa
with her
siblings in
Louisiana.**

**Elsa, right,
with her
cousins in
Minnesota.**



Services move with us

ELSA KESTI PHOTOS: JESSICA KESTI

Over the past two years, my family has moved around the country for my dad's schooling. We have lived in Louisiana, Texas, Arizona and Minnesota.

In Louisiana and Texas, there was not a local congregation where we could attend services. On Sundays, our family sat together and listened to church online. After services, my dad

read Bible stories to my brother and me for Sunday school.

I missed being with friends and family and other believers. So I was very happy whenever we were able to attend services with others.

Now we live in Tucson, Ariz., and we listen to online services again. I am happy that we are only two hours away from other believers! ■

All praise belongs to God



There were many service guests at Kempele rauhanyhdistys on the 20th of September, but safety distances were kept. Raimo Ollila thanked God in the opening prayer: "We want to thank God for leading our lives and blessing us."



Drinks and refreshments were served at the cafeteria. Two separate one-sermon services are organized on Sundays in Kempele. Services are also broadcast through the internet: <http://kempeleenrauhanyhdistys.fi/kuuntele>.

TEXT AND PHOTOS: MATIAS HAARANIEMI
TRANSLATION: JAAKKO KONTKANEN

One does not need to worry about tomorrow, but it is good to take care of one's own life, family, and one another.

Service guests gathered for services at Kempele rauhanyhdistys in northern Finland on Sunday, 20th of September. Many listeners were present, but safety distances were kept.

Raimo Ollila from Muhos was the speaker. The text for his sermon was from the book of Exodus. The text

reminded us that God takes good care of his creation.

The water of life cleanses from sin

The speaker noted that the water of life is often mentioned in the Bible. It is the water that wipes away all sin from the conscience.

"Whoever drinks living water becomes a source of the water that flows from the fountain of life. A believer has the authority to preach the gospel to others, which cleanses from sin."

Temporal food is essential to man: if one does not receive food, they will die. Ollila compared this to the gospel in saying that the same will happen if a believer does not receive nourishment from the gospel.

“Everyone receives as much food as they need, each one according to their needs.”

Hearing of the Word around the world

Keeping the sabbath day holy was brought up in the sermon.

“As believers we want to keep the sabbath day holy. It is good to settle down with family on this day of rest and among other things come to hear the Word of God. God in his wisdom has conceived the systems by which the Word is broadcast through the internet and radio,” Ollila stated.

He admired how God’s word can be listened to around the world.

It is still time for work

The speaker spoke of how many people forsake God’s word and God, and do not believe the Bible and its message.

“I have noticed that many of these people still listen to services through the internet. Our work, which we do

through God-given power, is not in vain.”

He gave examples of how some had listened to services through the internet for years, and it affected them in such a way that their souls began to yearn for the gospel.

“There are yet people who are searching for living faith. We work as long as it is time to work.”

Everything is a gift from God

Ollila also spoke about God’s gift of livelihood.

“It is enough that we have the needs for today. God knows how far we will manage with our livelihood. Although God has given us a livelihood, it is important that this would not become a matter of pride.”

The speaker encouraged to read the book of Job from time to time. God gave Job temporal success, but Job forgot from whom all good comes from.

“It is important tonight that we remember to thank for all the good we have received and to care for our neighbors. That we would give of that good which God has given onto us. It is more blessed to give than to receive. ■

Holy day of rest

TEXT: JUHA HAKULINEN

TRANSLATION: MAURY JOHNSON

During my studies, I worked as a security guard for a security company one summer. The goal was to make as much money as possible for the winter. Because of the shift work of a guard, generous increments were paid and as a result many additional shifts were taken, especially when there were not many other leisure activities available in the locality.

Additional hours were taken. Shifts were taken on holidays and weekends. Sundays in particular were

lucrative when they automatically included a 100% Sunday supplement. That meant double pay. If overtime or extra work coefficients were added onto the salary, then they were particularly good paying work days!

“Remember the sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work.” (Exodus 20: 8–10.)

I thought the obligations assigned by the employer must be handled



PIXABAY

diligently – no matter how the work is marked on any day, even Sunday. However, most of the Sunday work I did was completely voluntary. I also tried to explain this to myself as obligations assigned by the employer, but I basically felt guilty about promising to work on those days.

“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” (Exodus 20:11.)

As a young man with lots of energy, the day of rest seemed mostly constraining, and the blessing it brought was not properly understood. The meaning of rest – and the blessing – did not open up then as it does today. Today, I understand a day off in exactly the opposite way: as an entrepreneur, when the pressure to work is year-round and round-the-clock, the day off feels mostly like a liberating oasis. Regularly recurring opportunities to rest and calm down are needed, even absolutely necessary.

There is a feeling that there is actually permission to stay away from work. You may not even think about it at all, yet you know that you will not lose anything, even if you are tired of working around the clock.

“There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is the sabbath to the Lord.” (Leviticus 23:3.)

However, the day of rest is not meant to be a day of slavish observation but for rest and refreshment (Mark 2:27). I believe that God reveals to the people in the law of the Ten Commandments a natural relationship to the amount of work and rest. A weekly day of rest, like other holidays, leads a person to delve deeper into the word of God. Hearing the word of God sanctifies the Sabbath, separating it from everyday life. That’s how I believe and think. ■

“I hope to go to heaven one day” – sowing work bears fruit

Believers from the village of Kwasitenten in Ghana gathered for a worship service on September 26 at 8 a.m.

TEXT: PÄIVI MARTIKAINEN PHOTO: JOSEPH KUSE
TRANSLATION: KEITH HAKSO

The phrase “you reap what you sow” does not apply in the matter of faith. God gives the harvest.

Believers from the Kwasitenten congregation gathered in Ghana on Sunday, September 26, for a worship service at 8 a.m.

“We listened to the Holy Word for the nourishment of our immortal soul, for the strengthening of our faith, and for the preservation of a good conscience,” said George Dodzidenu, who spoke there.

According to him, the participants felt a strong spiritual connection and love.

Kwasitenten is a village in the east of the country. Its inhabitants are mainly farmers.

It is important to support children on their road of faith

The subject of the sermon was the work of sowing seeds, and the chosen

Bible texts were from Galatians 6:7–8, Ephesians 6:1–4, Proverbs 22:8 and Micah 6:10–15.

“It is clear from the texts that God cannot be deceived by the claim that everyone reaps what he or she sows. In this context, seeds refer to the virtues that we see in our every daily life,” Dodzidenu explained.

The importance of raising children and supporting their lives of faith was mentioned.

“Parents do the work of sowing by supporting their children, and the harvest will be gathered in the future. The right kind of support does not include, for example, provoking or discouraging children. Man can raise children to trust in God, but God gives the harvest.

Review of methods

The speaker added that the topic may also be related to the way we earn a living.

“Because people want to satisfy the demands of their corrupt nature, wrong



and unethical means are used every day: deceit, lies, violence and unethical business practices in the hope of getting rich and gaining worldly recognition.

Ghana has a lot of natural resources. If they are exploited for the good of the people, the living conditions of citizens will improve, Dodzidenu pointed out.

“However, because of a lack of honest leadership and due to general corruption, the country is in debt and the poverty rate is becoming unbearable,” he regretted.

“We must reflect on our way of life and want to believe the forgiveness of our sins in Jesus’ name and precious blood.

Faith brings a change in lifestyle

After the sermon, Kwasi Donkor spoke and wondered why he had not achieved his goals even though he has tried to live obediently since childhood.

The congregation replied to him that it is not worth comparing yourself to others. Instead you should compare your current situation to where you started. Donkor should list the good things in his life one by one to see how God has blessed him.

Donkor said he had stopped going to church for a long time before he found living faith. As a result of receiving the grace of repentance, his life has changed. Friends have also noticed this and expressed surprise that he has become sober, for instance.

“I am always happy when I am with believers, especially during services. Listening to a sermon and participating in biblical conversation strengthens my faith and helps me keep a good conscience. There’s a lot of joy in my life, and I hope to go to heaven one day. ■

My name is Catherine Zaku



I live in the town of Amasamani, Ghana.

I work as a cook.

Living as a believer has brought joy to my heart because sometimes it still feels like my faith fades during difficult circumstances.

When I see other believers, I feel very happy.

As we gather to listen to God's word, I open my heart to hear so that it will help me in my daily life.

For me, an important part of the Bible is Matt. Romans 7:7: Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you:

Faith has had a positive impact on my life by giving me stability and peace.

Many believers are surprised when they come to Ghana and realize that the same faith they have exists here.

I rejoice in my faith because I can always ask for the forgiveness of my sins.

Life is sometimes challenging for me, but because I trust in God, I know that these troubles will eventually end.

In the future, I hope that my faith will be strengthened and that more and more people in Ghana and Africa as a whole would accept faith. ■

INTERVIEW: GEORGE DODZIDENU PHOTO: PROVIDED BY THE INTERVIEWEE TRANSLATION: KEITH HAKSO
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**“Come to me,
all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.”**

MATT. 11:28