

News and news

Bastian Fähnrich, 5 August 2018

OIEF, St. Luke's Chapel, Oulu

1) Welcome & Opening Prayer

Dear God, our Heavenly Father.

Thank You for making it possible for us to gather here today.

To gather together. Not only alone, each one for him- or herself.

But You have joined us with each other, and in your Spirit.

Through Jesus, Your beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour.

Thank You, once more, that we can gather here today.

Here. In this church. Today.

Let us be really here. Now.

Let us truly come and enter Your presence. Now.

Not in the next moment. Now. Here and now.

Let us open our ears and hearts.

That we may hear what You have to say to us.

That You may quiet all other sources in and around us.

We ask you to be our only Source, our sole Resource.

Here and now, and tomorrow, and ever after.

In Jesus's name we pray,

Amen.

2) Devotion

In the past weeks you've probably heard many news (if you have not ignored what's happening around you and around the globe). Anyway, here are just but a few of all the news that you may have heard about in recent times:

You have probably heard about the Thai boys that were trapped in a cave filled with water. They were eventually saved out of their distress, and all the boys survived. It was reported in the world news that – gladly – only one of the rescue team members lost his life. As you may remember, there was a joint effort from many divers around the world to bring about this miracle. One of the divers, Mikko Paasi, said in the Finnish media that the successful rescue was *“unbelievable”*, that *“someone was on their side”* along their mission ([YLE news](#), 12 July 2018).

You have probably heard that the rescue mission in the Mediterrean sea by the EU and NGOs has been partly stopped. And that many refugees have drowned already this year in their effort to reach shores and European soil. And that

many governments didn't allow rescue ships to anchor in their harbours but rather let the vessels drift on the sea for many days, or return the refugees to where they had originally come and fled from. Likewise, however, we have also been able to listen to news that some countries are trying to put their efforts together to better the situation. They want to jointly get to the root causes of the refugee problems in this world, or at least share the burden of giving refuge to people in their countries.

You have probably heard of fires that have spread in various parts of Europe in the past weeks. Firefighters from different countries are joining forces together. Equipment is being shared across borders to help out each other. In some places the battle against the flames led to victory, in other places to bitter defeat. Lives were lost. Homes were lost. In any case, in many places there is nowadays left only burnt ground. Of course, the soil may bear fruit and forests may flourish again in due course of time. And homes will be rebuilt in the next months. By joint efforts.

You have probably also heard of – or even experienced by yourself – the scorching sun and draught in the past weeks, be it here in Finland or elsewhere in Europe. The media certainly covered the hot weather in the news, and gave hints and tips to cope with the heat. Many people are pondering about how to alleviate the consequences of our extreme warm climate, such as the shortage or even failure of crops. Politicians are currently thinking about compensating the farmers' losses out of common taxes, and ensuring the availability of grain for maintaining the supply of food in their nations. Today it is, again, news that the heat waves of the past weeks are now ebbing away, or they are rather being replaced by heavy rains and floods, thunderstorms and lightnings.

All of the aforementioned is news – bad and good news alike. I have a few questions for you to think about:

How did you bear with, or live by all the news in recent times (given the fact that you cannot ignore the news)? Is the news always about something new in this world? Or, does the news tell you something new about your life and the lives of people on this earth?

At first thought, we can probably reason with King Solomon and say that *“there is nothing new under the sun”* ([Ecclesiastes 1:9](#)). If this were the case, then we can possibly stop thinking and conclude – just like this great and wise king: *“all of the things seen and done under the sun are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.”* ([Ecclesiastes 1:14](#), change of word order, BF).

At second thought, however, we can reason with Jesus – the King of kings – and his heirs, that as long as life is going on and we are living on this planet, there is hope, and we should stand together and make this life better due to our love for humankind and God’s creation. In this case the news of the past weeks teaches us to reach out to other people and the planet with a helping hand. It means not only to help ourselves (if we even could do that!) but rather to join forces with each other, wherever and whenever we can, like Jesus told us ([John 13:15](#), [1 Peter 2:21](#), [1 John 2:6](#)) and as the apostles lived their lives among the first fellowships and in relation to the world around them ([Acts 2:42-47](#), [Galatians 6:10](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:15b](#)).

As followers of Jesus, we also have a special mission with regard to news: we are called to share God’s good news ([Matthew 28:19](#)). The good news that God brings is forgiveness through Christ: He forgives where we are going wrong, He rescues when we are about to drown in our own sin, or where we are scorched by the fire of sin and thirsty but not capable to cater for justice. Thanks to Jesus we are not only forgiven ourselves, but we can also forgive others and make straight ways with each other, or contribute and make little steps to heal our scorched planet.

So, let me even conclude that if God’s good news were the case for us, for you and me, then “*knowledge*” of the state of the world and ourselves would not bring only “*much grief*”, as king Solomon suggests ([Ecclesiastes 1:18](#)), but “*great joy for all the people*”, as we can read in the Gospel of Luke ([2:10](#)). God’s good news would move us to follow in Jesus’s and fellow believers’ footsteps all our life long. Even the bad news of this world could then encourage us to point to God and His salvation and His divine aid (He may use also people to save from sin or natural disasters, of course). And the occasional good news – such as the rescue of the Thai boys from the water-flooded caves – may help us to point out to people around us that God is in charge of all our lives and this planet. We could then joyfully conclude with the Psalmist:

*“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.*

Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story [for the Lord saved them from their different kinds of distress – see the entire psalm, BF] (...)

*Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind.” ([Psalm 107](#))*

Amen.

3) Song

- [Turn your eyes upon Jesus](#) (MP 712)

4) Intercessory Prayers & Closing Prayer

Dear God, our Heavenly Father,

Thank You for bringing Your Good news to this world through Jesus Christ.

Thank You for forgiving our sins.

Thank You for forgiving our shortcomings to care for others and Your creation.

Your Good News heals and sustains us and gives us new direction each day – thank You so much!

Let us never forsake or turn away from Your Good news, the News of all times.

Make us always listen to it, learn it by heart, obey it and share it with others around us and around the globe.

Thank You for Helmuth and Niina and Nea, our missionaries in Namibia – bless their work and family.

Thank You for Jacky and Mercy, our God-children in Kenya – bless them and remind us that we also are your children, and help us to grow in our faith.

Thank You for guiding us in our walk of life by Your Holy Spirit.

As we are wandering on this earth in Jesus's footsteps, tuned in to the Gospel, make us also hear the bad and good news of this world and our fellow human beings. Encourage us to always speak up as Christian believers, and act towards other people just as Jesus and His early followers would have done.

Let our fellowship be a sanctuary for those in need of You.

You only are worthy to be praised and honoured.

We pray all of this with great joy and thankfulness.

Amen.

5) Song

- Blessing Song

6) Announcements

7) Farewell & Fellowship Time