

Voice of Zion Editorial

By Grace Alone

WE LIVE IN A TIME in which ruthlessness and hardness have increased. In human interactions it appears in the use of words, "That, I will never forgive!" Ruthlessness brings about evil. It occurs, among other things, in family breakdown, in crimes done in retaliation, and, at its worst, in terrorism arising from bitterness.

Each one of us needs mercy, which is one of the Christian faith's fundamental concepts. It is the love that God shows towards sinful people, forgiveness for their bad deeds or sins. According to Scripture, a person is saved by grace. Salvation is a gift that we can receive through faith (Eph. 2:2-10).

Luther's instruction about grace is still relevant. Having found the God of grace, Luther rejected the Roman Catholic doctrine of merit. He taught that salvation is possible alone by grace, alone by faith, alone by the merits of Christ. If salvation were even in part a result of people's efforts, then the issue would no longer be by grace, but by [our] merit. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace" (Rom. 11:6). Thus, grace and works are mutually exclusive matters. The thief on the cross and the prodigal son are good examples of how a person is saved without his own merit.

Grace can also be understood incorrectly. Scriptural teaching concerning sin and grace are needed today. Grace is not a cover, under which we can hide sinful life. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1,2).

We cannot merit salvation, but we can lose it. Grace teaches us to live as God's children in this world, "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. 2:11,12).

A hearer of the Word shared that he waits in a sermon for that moment when the speaker begins to proclaim the forgiveness of sins. Each one of us needs to hear this proclamation. Jesus taught that when you have done everything that you should do, then say, "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). Jesus did everything on our behalf. He fulfilled the entire demanding Law. He died on the cross on behalf of every sinful person.

God's kingdom on earth is a kingdom of grace, to which all who long for grace are invited. All sins are forgiven by grace in God's kingdom. In the song of Zion, the proclamation of God's grace is powerfully heard, "Jesus, You paid the price for my sin-guilty soul. Sacred blood from Your side on the cross for me flowed. Through Your merit I'm pure-I'm a child of my Father! In Your kingdom secure, crimson blood drops I gather" (SHZ 299:2).

Antti Paananen

Translated from Siionin Lähetyslehti, no. 2, 2016

At 2016 LLC Winter Services in Phoenix, Randy Herrala presents the topic of "Confession" at Friday evening's Congregation and Youth Evening.

News & Notes from LLC

Saskatoon, Sask. believers Trent and Lori Simonson were among the approximately 2000 services guests this year.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Feeling Welcomed in a "Place of Shelter" at

"Risen is our Sun in vict'ry shining on the mount today! Beams of warmth from Him are streaming, sorrows, griefs are cast away! Gather now, O birds of heaven, soar through pure, refreshing air. Chirp and twitter, larks and sparrows on vine branches fresh and fair" (SHZ 119:1). Another Easter is behind us, yet the message of Easter offers hope for the tired traveler. Through Christ's redemption work, the child of God will make it to heaven. Our hearts join with the songwriter: "As the heav'nly angels do, we can be rejoicing. We can run to tell the news: "Our Jesus now is living!" (SHZ 111:4).

Updates on Several LLC Activities

- An estimated 2,000 services guests attended LLC Winter Services that began February 24 in Prescott Valley and continued through the weekend in Phoenix. The services motto, "Seek the Lord and his strength" (1 Chr. 16:11), resonated through the many sermons over the course of the weekend. We thank the believers in the Southwest for again hosting the services. May God richly repay your "work and labor of love." Read coverage of these services in this issue of the Voice of Zion.
- The LLC Board of Directors held its winter meeting on February 26. At that time, the Board approved hiring Rod Nikula as Christian Educator Coordinator. The Board's decision came after hearing the recommendation of the Personnel Committee, who had met previously to consider applicants that had shown interest in the new position. The newly established position was brought to the LLC Annual Meeting for discussion and approval. In addition to an LLC update, those gathered were able to hear a presentation that was

first kept at 2015 Summer Services in Outlook, Sask., "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:18). These meetings help maintain lines of communication and give possibility to foster unity among workers in God's kingdom.

- LLC Ministers Camp is scheduled to be held at Stony Lake Camp, April 15-17. It gives opportunity for the ministers to meet and discuss joys and concerns of our day and to be refreshed in the mutual work to which they've been called. In previous years it has been heart-warming to see the support that congregations have offered in sending their ministers to camp. We pray that God would bless this opportunity, and most of all that He would keep our ministers in mutual love and unity of Spirit.

- A joint meeting of the Finance and Personnel/ Facilities Committees was held on February 25 in Phoenix. Discussions centered on long term planning regarding personnel and facilities. The committees were able hear a report from the SLC Development and Southern Minnesota Facilities committees in regards to necessary improvements at SLC. Look for information about renovation plans at SLC in the near future.

- The LLC Annual Meeting notice, agenda, and delegate packet for the July 2 meeting in Toronto, will be sent to congregations in mid-April. In addition, the 2017 LLC Draft Operating Plan will be sent to the congregations for review. The Plan's 2017 theme is, "The

Phoenix Winter Services	1
Sermons of God's Word Refresh, Uplift	1
Editorial: By Grace Alone	2
News & Notes from LLC	2
The Sabbath Word 1: Witnesses of the Resurrected	3
The Living Water	3
Hoitakaa uskoa	4
Care for Faith.....	4
A Word in Edgewise	4
Home and Family: My Heart Sings.....	5
Desert Blooms with Flowers of Grace, Remembrance, and Fellowship at Arizona Seniors Camp	6
Winter Services Begin in Prescott, Ariz.	6
Services Listener Notes Sermons' Common Theme-a Message of Hope	7
Youth Page: Phoenix Winter Services Draws the Young and Singles, Too	8-9
God's Word Touches the Young Believer, Too	8
Youth Share in Duties at Services	8
"Singing Reminds Us Why We're at Services"	8
Services Is a Great Opportunity	8
Haps Highlights at Services.....	9
God Knows, Fills Our Needs	9
2016 LLC Summer Services Planning Update	10
History of the Toronto Laestadian Lutheran Congregation . .	10
The Sabbath Word 3: God's People Long for Home	11
Servants of the Word Are Fed at Services, Too	12
God Richly Blessed Phoenix Winter Services!	12

Did You Know 13
Obituaries, Ads, Service Schedules, Announcements . . 13-15
Florida Winter Services Draw "Snowbirds," Other Guests to
Hear God's Word..... 16

position will focus primarily on
teacher support and training, Home
Rod Nikula

Fear of the Lord Grants Security." The theme comes
from the book of Proverbs, "In the fear of the Lord is
and Family and diaconal work, and coordinating efforts in music production. We wish Nikula God's
abundant blessings as he begins his work on April 1 at the LLC office in Loretto, Minn.

- Board members from congregations in the Western Region were able to attend the annually
scheduled area-wide meeting held this year on March 12 in Seattle. Each LLC area holds similar meetings
on an annual basis where they prepare plans for regional activities as well as make decisions that will be
strong confidence: and his children shall have a place
of refuge" (Prov. 14:26).

- Final proofing and editing continues with the Chorale Book project. The plan is for a three-volume
book with over 800 arrangements. The Publications depart- ment is making plans to release the long-
awaited book at 2016 LLC Summer Services in Toronto.

Eric Jurmu