

Funeral Service of Anssi Simojoki  
31 July 2020

Confessional Address

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

We will shortly join our voices in these words of the Psalm. Is it not utterly inappropriate, indeed in bad taste, to put those joyful words of Easter day in the mouths of grieving mourners today of all days? On Easter morning, our Lord Jesus Christ, broke the power of death by His bodily resurrection from the dead. Today, we have gathered here in Uusikaupunki New Church precisely because death finally, after many attempts, managed to fell the mortal body of our dear husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, friend, colleague, the unique Anssi Simojoki. Surely no one would disapprove if the glad songs of salvation were not heard just today even in the tents of the righteous.

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

It isn't even true, is it, that this day was made by the Lord. On the contrary, this day is an indication that the creation of our Creator is still being trampled by the enemy. God didn't make us to be prey for death. Rather, His good will is that we live in His image and as the crown of creation. Death came into the world as a result of the fall and of disobedience; the presence of death is a sure demonstration that sin is still raging in the world. The Holy Scriptures declare unequivocally: The wages of sin is death.

We are laying the body of Anssi Simojoki in the ground because of sin, because of his own sin. This day has been made by sin, death and the Devil; and in spite of all my father's achievements, all his uniqueness, this day came because Anssi Simojoki was born of sinful flesh and like his fathers, had sinned in many and various ways. To the end of his life, he felt strongly the load of his own sins and his sinfulness. Anssi Simojoki was guilty of sin before God, and had deserved both temporal and eternal death; and if he was standing here in my place, he would be the first to persuade you of that fact.

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Yet, we haven't gathered here only because Anssi Simojoki's earthly journey has come to its end. We are not here only because we share a great sorrow. Nor are we here only because yet another sinner has received in his body the wages of sin. This day of great sorrow is, after all, a day of joy and gladness.

For even though his sinful nature was the first, lethal truth about Anssi Simojoki, it was not the final truth. In the autumn of 1944, sinful and mortal little Anssi met the righteous, death-defeating Christ. In baptism, he received as a gift the forgiveness of sin, the righteousness of Christ, and eternal life. The multitude of his sins was nailed to the cross of Jesus, and he rose already to live that eternal life whose beginning is here on earth and which lasts forever in heaven.

We grieve because our dear husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, friend and colleague is no longer here to enrich our lives. His magnificent singing voice will no longer ring out in our homes and churches. His profound and clear preaching and teaching of the Gospel will no longer be heard in our midst. His enormous erudition and deep wisdom are no longer here to guide and counsel us.

But even in the midst of tears and sorrow, we are glad and rejoice. Anssi's voice is now ringing out in the choir of saints and angels, singing the song of victory. He is enjoying the fulfillment of all those promises which he faithfully proclaimed. All wavering, temporary human knowledge and wisdom has been exchanged for the full knowledge of God's great wisdom before the throne of God and the Lamb. By taking Anssi in its lethal grip,

death has finally lost its grip on him and has been forced to hand him over eternally to the gentle but unfailing hold of the Lord of life, our Christ.

The wages of sin is death. But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

Anssi Simojoki has moved from time to eternity. Sin and death have done their worst; Christ has done His much greater best.

We have gathered here to wait our own turn. Today in this coffin lies Anssi Simojoki. In the next funeral, it will be some other one of us. For the same sin that troubled Anssi troubles us all. The same wages of sin that he had to receive in his body of death awaits us all.

But the same Christ who redeemed Anssi is the Saviour us all. He died for the sins of the whole world, also yours and mine. No one needs to perish, for the whole world has salvation in the crucified and risen Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life.

Jesus is calling you all, us all, to confessing our sins and in confession handing them over to Him, and to receiving by faith the forgiveness of sins. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved. Let us receive salvation from the power of sin and death by taking refuge in the promises God made to us in holy baptism and by handing over our sins to Jesus. In Him, we have life and everlasting salvation. Amen.

Let us humble ourselves before all-knowing God and confess our sins.