



MISSIONARIES for ETHIOPIA

at JESUS' HEART MATTER

PROLOGUE

Youth night at Kaisaniemi was nearing its end. Carefully I take a few steps towards the Bible teacher at the back of the room. We shake hands and I present myself. Firmly staring into my eyes he asks: *“Are you the son of Tapio Räisänen?”* After an affirmative answer I surprisingly hear of a person I don’t recall meeting, but who changed our family’s eternity. *”I knew your grampa during his last few years. ‘Robbers hand shake’ is a testimony that I often use in my speeches. Your grampa became a believer in prison and later lived in Salvation Army dormitory here at Helsinki. We met as he regularly attended Street Missions program held by the youth. Alas he fell again to alcoholism, but believed the forgiveness of sins on his death bed. With his last strength he quizzed your uncle’s hand for a sign of common faith.”*

The murmur of nourished souls fill the hall. I wonder about not having a clear memory of my grampa. In my blurred memories I recall coming back from Ethiopia to Finland for his funeral and a photograph where I’m standing by his body in a coffin. Yet further in a dream like distant remembrance is an image of a smiling bald man sitting by a kitchen table. Now with the eyes of faith, I do see him in the glory. *”Your grampa was proud of his missionary son. He often showed me pictures of his son and his family at Ethiopia.”*

Astonished by everything I wonder how it is possible that my close relatives have touched people's lives in such way! Can anyone imagine them as heroes of faith? Olavi's alcoholism destroyed his family, the lives of his six children and advanced the death of his wife Elina before the age of 50. Their first born son Tapio suffered undernourishment, homelessness, adoption of two siblings, tramp like life with fifteen different primary schools, lack of love and broken self-esteem. I would rather define them as miserable, poor, sinful, weak and sick beggars of grace. However, in my reflections, I do see them having lived and yet live their lives for God's glory. His majesty, love, mercy and grace can be seen in lives of these men. God will not give his glory to another. Prisoned for an attempt of murder and for stabbing his wife an alcoholic received the gift of faith and experienced this amazing grace in a dungeon. This caused awakening in the Räisänen family and God called Tapio, a rickety child who later became a carpenter for the great commission in Africa. Such fool's grace the world doesn't understand.

The Gospel of the cross is such foolishness. Jesus suffered and died - innocently. An innocent man died on behalf of guilty. Through his surrogate death and resurrection the miracle of salvation is offered for everyone. Murderers, adulterers, thieves, liars, cowards, failures, actually all of us bad and sinful people receive forgiveness of sins only by believing in Jesus. He suffered on a cross but didn't condemn his murderers. In his heart he went through a battle for mankind and continues that battle today. Passionately he prays and sends us to meet people, asking: *"Would you*

live your life for God's glory?" By losing our life's for Jesus we live for the glory of God and that's the best thing that could happen to us.

Let us move yet to a time before email. Time when president Urho Kaleva Kekkonen was in his last term as president of Republic of Finland. A young couple has just been wed by Rev. Sakari Kähkönen in Kaarlela church at Kokkola. Escorted by merry and excited mission friends the couple left to Africa. Exhausted after weeks of traveling they gladly arrive to Dembi Dollo a small country side town in Western Ethiopia. Still today it lives its own remote life. Distant from countries capital Addis Abeba and it's pulse and sphere of influence. Soon after their arrival Ethiopian communist goverment closed the churches and nationalized them. The persecuted congregation had to hide.

In this environment Helena and Tapio would find their common calling. Together they will learn to listen and obey God more than people. Obeying God's call and acting accordingly had already brought them to Ethiopia. This obedience had given them life and peace with God. They had confessed Jesus as the Lord of their lives. Now as a couple they would learn to understand that Jesus Christ is the Lord and savior of the whole world, including Ethiopians. Following Bible verse became important for them during this time of missionary work.

"I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul." – Jeremiah 32:41

Their presence and life among the persecuted church of Ethiopia was the position where God guided them to be. Helena and Tapio got to experience a spiritual awakening and learned to be dependent of God and his guidance. Living according to God's will often led to fierce feelings and inhuman bravery that come only of obedience to God. Today they continue to live for God's glory and work to speed the coming of the day of God.

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens." – Ecclesiastes 3:1

At Jesus' heart matter is a book about missionary work. Missionary work is being described broadly so that the book could work as a teaching material in Bible schools, missionary training and encouragement for all mission minded friends.

Helena and Tapio are missionaries for Ethiopia. They have witnessed the revival in Christian church and the persecution during communist government in Ethiopia. Hopefully the stories of God's guidance in young couple's life could be an encouragement for many. Their heart matter was family work in Mekane Yesus church and waking up the Ethiopian people to talk about a taboo namely: "Sex that God created."

It's been a privilege to work as an editor for two greatest heroes of my life. This book was inspired by the Holy Spirit to work also as a tool for my self-examination. I was the first born in Räisänen family in Ethiopia and lived my childhood at Dembi Dollo's countryside village. As a child I wondered about my parent's work and our common life in my beautiful country of birth. I'm not "a native Ethiopian", but rather a Finn and my home country is Finland. Yet as a sinful human being I'm black and bad inside and on my way to hell. The love of Jesus reconciled my and your sins on the cross. Thanks to him for this and for leading missions with prayers. His heart matter is that all could one day get to be with our Father and Him in heaven.

