

## Laestadian prayer meeting at Jaurekaska in 1911

Karl-Erik Forsslund has described a Laestadian prayer meeting during a trip a long Stora Lulevatten in 1911:

Finally, at half past 7, the preachers have slept in and gathered strength for the impending battle. The devotion can begin. The gathering house is the old man Keira's big hut. It is empty and cleared, dishes, household utensils, and all the small things of everyday life are taken outside. The preachers sit in *passjo* (the middle of the hut). Everyone is finally gathered, the women on the right. Old man Keira is also there, closest to the preachers. Men and boys on the left.

It will be a sermon with an interpreter, "... since not everyone present fully understands lapp (sami)".

And a sermon that was also mostly intended for me. About different cults and how only one can be the right one. It will be a whole concentrated history of Christianity and cults, extremely original and freehand drawn, often illustrated by small threats with hell and the devil, but still reasonably dry and cold. The essence is the difference between "the living and the dead Christianity", and we have the living and real one, as "Luthérus" and Laestadius understood and interpreted it. The translator translates quickly and distinctly self-consciously. Often addresses are made to the audience: "... or what, Christian people" - "what say you old men, and you young men," (...)

And it becomes a skillful escalation, the appeals more and more immediately, the voice begins to tremble (...)

Then the oldest woman walks forward and throws herself into his arms, sobbing and shouting ever louder. She passes into sami, and now a young widow steps forward, and now the dark youth rises quite beside himself and sinks into his arms. And one after the other follows the example, the women first, the men later.

They go to the Swedish preacher first, to the sami one later, but eventually some to the former, others to the latter. Over there becomes a packed cluster of bodies, all in

each other's arms, occasionally one or the other preacher's face glimpses ahead, tense, wet with tears and sweat. And everyone raves the louder and wilder. (...)

Those who have been to the preachers, then begin a walk around the hut from one to the other of their own people. Each gets a hug amid sobs and murmurs. They forgive each other's sins and, according to the preacher, rely on the words "as we forgive them our debts".

*Forsslund, Karl-Erik: As a guest of the mountain people. The Lapps and their country descriptions and studies IV published by Hjalmar Lundbom. 1914.*