



Children's Christmas

In Japan for the Gospel
With WEC International
Shuichi and Elaine Kitamura
Prayer Letter No 182 Mar, 2017



Shuichi clearing the snow

Mighty to Save! Zeph 3:17; Is 63:1

Thirty years ago in another place, the Lord brought us in touch with a family who lived deep in the mountains – a fastness of entrenched idolatry, as all mountain townships are. The story began when the two daughters came to the church for English and Bible. Unbeknown to us, a near tragedy was unfolding for them. It was only much later, after nearly the whole family had come to the Lord, that we found out what they had gone through. The father became surety for a friend to the tune of about \$500,000. (It is an important responsibility to help a friend in need.) As sometimes happens, that friend was unable to pay his debt, and in misguided desperation he disappeared, leaving our friend with the legal responsibility. The family gathered in shocked conference to consider the options open to them: doing a night flit themselves, committing group suicide, or working to repay the debt. They chose the last.

The whole family helped. One of the teenage daughters learnt to handle a chain saw, felling trees in the mountains! Eventually, after 11 years of intense work, and severe economy, the debt was cleared, but in response to the stress the father had become an alcoholic. It was at that point that we became involved with the rest of the family. The father was the last to respond to Christ, and in great trepidation he destroyed his idols. But his alcoholism was not immediately cured, and one night after drinking heavily, due to his carelessness the house was burned to the ground. He himself was not expected to live because of the extent of his burns, and scabs on his lungs. But God had mercy. His faith grew. He traced the whereabouts of his false friend, and expressed forgiveness and released him from financial responsibility. In his wheelchair he testified in many places to God's great grace. Eventually he was called home, and at his funeral his now reconciled friend carried the hearse, weeping profusely as he walked.

Over the years we kept in touch with the family, and recently the daughter, who now runs a business in Tokyo, sent us a copy of the book that she had written of her experiences. Also a summary was made into a tract.

We have a purpose in sharing this story with you.

For the past 5 years we have been on friendly terms with the cheerful elderly lady (Mrs T) who delivers printed matter to our house most weekends. Since she has shown an interest in printed testimonies that we have given her, and likes to read, we gave her the above tract and lent her the book. What was our surprise one day to see her arrive at our doorstep unrelated to any delivery. She came inside the entrance and told us her story.

Several years ago, my husband had responsibility on behalf of local farmers for a big project. He mishandled the funds, was arrested, and we were left with a huge debt of about \$500,000 to repay. We sold our small farm and now I am paying off the rest. My husband has now passed away. I pass on my whole pension, and work at delivery (she is in her 80s and can hardly walk). My minimal living needs are met by my son. Of course I am despised in my village and have lost all my friends. But I have made other friends among some who do volunteer work. I accept this as my lot in life, and do not hold resentment." When she passes on, her son will inherit the debt, so she wants it to be reduced as much as possible while she still lives. Her daughter-in-law committed suicide from the shame.

The book deeply touched her heart. Now she is eagerly reading other material. Please pray that the Holy Spirit will open her heart to the truth, and that she will find a new life in Christ.

We also shared the tract with the lady who collects our newspaper money at the door, and after reading it, she told us a similar story. Her husband was betrayed when he became guarantor for a friend's debt. All her earnings go into returning it bit by bit, month by month.

How many of the lovely, seemingly contented people around us are struggling with enormous burdens of

various kinds. From time to time God arranges for us to hear their story, and help them towards hope in the Living God. But their very sense of responsibility is often a hindrance to moving on to faith in Christ for eternal salvation. Responsibility to fulfil their share in the work and financial burdens of the village temples. Responsibility to pass on the traditions just as they have been received, and to keep the peace and not rock the boat in their extended family. And especially responsibility for “welfare” in the afterlife of their dead parents and grandparents, by continuing the offerings before the family altar. This is especially true in the rural places. But in His prayer the night before the cross the Lord Jesus said to the Father, “You granted me authority over all people, that I might give eternal life to all those you have given me.” Pray with us for wisdom and love in presenting the gospel in ways that will open the understanding. Pray for the work of the Holy Spirit in the revelation of truth to the heart. Pray for the release of the will to be able to respond.

Concert

Shuichi has a pastor friend in another town. “We have invited the famous guitarist/singer, Iwabuchi and his wife to our church for a special outreach concert and to share his testimony!” This was the content of his email the other day. The next sentence surprised us even more. “Iwabuchi will be giving his presentation for us on Friday and Sunday nights, and he is free on the Saturday. Would you like him to come to you for a concert? We will undertake for all expenses!” Wow! So we have accepted this generous offer, and the concert is planned for the afternoon of Sat, June 17th. We ask special prayer for the many aspects of preparation, but especially for God’s blessing on our visiting, that many will respond and be able to come! (As we say repeatedly, this is the first big battle that needs to be won!) We pray that it will not just be a “special event”, no matter how enjoyable, but will result in people seriously seeking God. June sounds a long way off, but we are telling you now, because the prayer lead-up is so important, and is not effective as a last minute rush.

WEC Mission functions.

Study/fellowship time, Mar 29th, 30th : This covers two days, and involves the Japanese pastors and their wives, and most of the missionaries. Japanese is our medium of communication for this time.

Annual missionary business conference, May 2nd – 6th : This is a live-in time, and involves much more than business. We are of several nationalities, from Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and a few Western countries. English is our medium of communication (being easier than Japanese for most), but even so many struggle with it.

Please pray for each of these functions that we will all be very sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and fully responsive to all that He wants to do in us and among us, and through us. And for help with communication.

Political Scene - “Righteousness exalts a nation.”

The political world is in confusion just now, with PM Abe suspected of dishonest dealings on a number of fronts, taking advantage of his position as PM. In addition he has had overconfidence in his 2/3 majority in both houses of parliament, and relevant authorities feel he has gone too far in tampering with the constitution. Hopefully hidden things will be brought to light, leading to an overall chastened and humbler attitude.

The situation with North Korea is becoming serious. From time to time they test guided missiles in the direction of Japan. The technological standard is getting higher very fast. A recent test sent 4 off simultaneously. They landed closer than ever, in Japanese territorial waters. USA has a large number of army bases in Japan, which is her ally for the stability of East Asia. To North Korea, USA is the “big ogre”, and the missiles aimed at Japan were interpreted by both Japan and US as a threat/warning to USA. The US army chief said that they were taking it very seriously.

The aim may be USA, but it is USA “in Japan”! It is not comforting to know that N Korea has nuclear weapons, and that their “Dear Leader” is not a stable or reasonable man.

With grateful thanks for your prayer partnership.

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