

A MESSAGE FOR WORLD-WIDE COMMUNION SUNDAY, OCT. 1, 1950

Today is world-wide communion Sunday. We celebrate the sacrament of our Lord's death along with thousands of fellow Christians around the world. Unitedly we remember our Lord's death through the symbolism of the breaking of bread and drinking of wine. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper has three great values or purposes. It reminds us of our Lord and His death on the cross for our sins. It turns our thoughts inward to examine our own lives to see whether there be any wicked way in us, and to confess that sin and get our selves straight with God again through the cleansing power of Jesus Christ. It brings us, in the third place, to a full sense of the fact that those of us who confess Christ are a communion of believers, a great company gathered at the Lord's table in the most wonderful fellowship the world can ever know. While we cannot overlook the first two values of the Lord's supper, I wish today to turn our thoughts especially to this third one, for this is world-wide communion Sunday.

Our people are more world-minded today than ever before. We support a great world organization--the United Nations. We are informed and interested in the welfare and progress and peace of nations

across the seas and hitherto little known to us. And as a church we are engaged in fulfilling our Lord's command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all people. We extend arms of Christian fellowship and love to those in mission lands who have heard the Gospel. Though these multitudes are unseen, we sit down with them today at the table of our Lord in the most intimate fashion. Let me ~~briefly~~ ^{briefly} on four communion services I have recently attended. They have special interest to us on this world-wide communion Sunday.

over They reflect the Birth of Communion at a village in Korea as a missionary to Korea. The musical name was recently the scene of the birth of a new church. The pastor of a nearby town church asked me last November to visit this village, one of two near his city in which members of his church had been visiting in the name of Christ, gathering children into outpost Sunday Schools, and laying the ground work for the establishment of a new church. The new principal of the grammar school of the village was a Christian elder, and it was to his home that we paid the first visit, and in a school room he provided that we held our first meeting. Several hundred villagers gathered, and listened patiently while I preached, during a second sermon by the nearby church pastor, and to a full service put on by the "young adults" of the nearby church. (The elder complimented the solo of a young deacon because he "sang like a goose.") I remembered particularly the keen attention of a dignified bearded old Chinese scholar who sat in the amen corner as though he had been to church all his life. As a matter of fact, it was his first visit.

This village became a part of our program of pioneer evangelism--the starting of new churches in un-churched territory. A man was secured to carry on the work. He had lived for years in North Korea, but had fled the communist oppression there a year or two ago. Though destitute--he could bring nothing with him from North Korea--he worked patiently with the people of the village. For the price of eight bags of rice, to be paid on the installment plan, a building which could be remodeled into a combination church and manse was secured. A winter crop of wheat was ready for harvest this spring. On invitation of the near-by pastor, I was asked to visit there in April and, as he expressed it, "gather in the first-fruits" of our work there. And so it was that I went there to examine a dozen new converts for the

They reflect some of my recent experiences as a missionary to Korea.

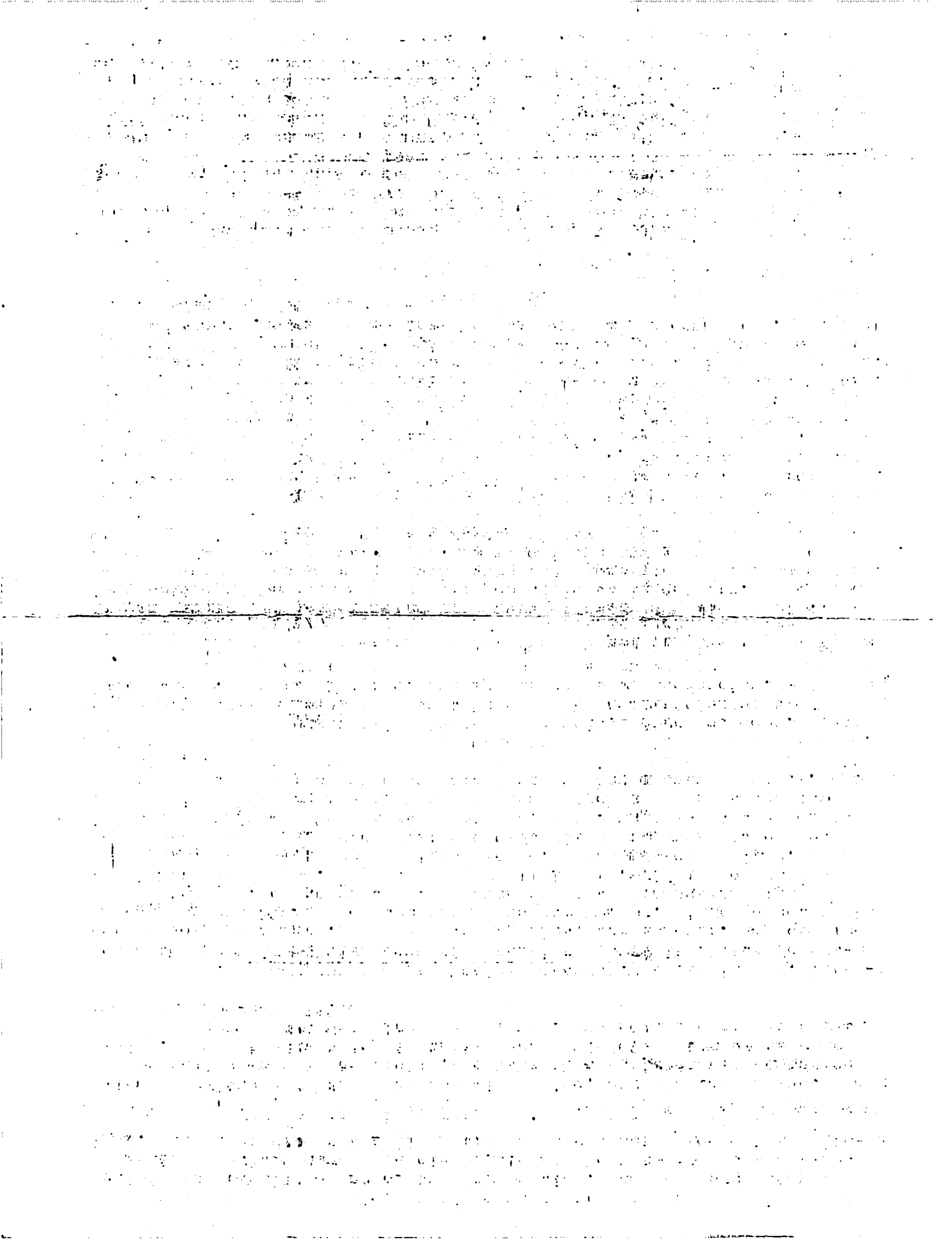
I Re-Fresh Communion at Pang-a-ta-di. This village with
the musical name - - -

"catechumen" class (a period of six months probation and learning before receiving baptism) and one or two for baptism. Among those who were so examined was the dignified old gentleman who was present the first night. He had found in the Bible truths he had never found in a lifetime of searching the Confucian classics. And then we held our first communion service. There were stares and whispered questions among the curious who witnessed this for the first time. We had to instruct the new believers very carefully, for they had never seen a communion service. But there was joy in their faces and joy in the presence of the angels of God as these lost were found, and as the church was established in Pang-a-ta-li.

II. A Communion among Social Outcasts. Early in May, I conducted the most impressive communion service of my life. It was outdoors under a warm sun. I was both organist and preacher. My congregation of about 300 sat on the ground on straw mats. I could not shake hands with them, or touch them, or even share the communion elements of which they partook. For they were all lepers, victims of perhaps the most terrible disease in all the world. Cast out of society, they had banded themselves into a village of their own. My first contact with them was just before last Christmas, when, upon invitation of a Presbyterian elder (a leper) who had been preaching among these people for some months, I was asked to hold examinations of new converts. At ~~that~~ that time, they lived in tents and miserable six-foot square huts built of sticks and stones. We had met outdoors in the biting December wind. This spring we met under slightly better physical circumstances. The local Presbytery had asked me to take over the supervision of the new church there, and I was performing my duties in this capacity.

All day Saturday, from early morning to nightfall, two Korean pastors and I had examined those who wished to be baptized or to join the catechumen class. In all we examined almost a hundred lepers. Never have I seen a group so well prepared in their answers. They had a reason for the faith that was in them, and were not ashamed to say so, or too ignorant to answer. They had memorized many passages of Scripture. Some of the most pitiful cases were especially earnest in their testimony to their conviction that soon they would go to be with their Lord, and that in place of their present painful and filthy bodies they would be clothed with resurrected bodies like that of the Lord they professed. And then on Sunday morning we held this service. It lasted nearly two hours and I was exhausted, but the congregation was not restless. What is time to a Korean? and what does time mean to those who have to spend their days apart from society while they suffer terrible physical pain? Their own choir sang. They gave of their mites an offering to the Lord, while singing the offeratory hymn used all over Korea, "I Surrender All." I baptized 46 of the lepers. Surely not many of us preachers ever have such an opportunity. And then we all partook of the communion. It took a long time. Many lepers were so diseased that the elder had to place the bread in their mouths and hold the cup to their lips. Because of the danger of the disease I could only pray with them, and not actually take part. But again there was the joy in our hearts as we saw some 75 new Christians, the nucleus of a new church, joining with Christians the world over in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

III. A Communion at the entrance of the valley of the shadow of death. A third communion service in which I recently was privileged to take part was on Sunday afternoon of June 25th. Our Korea Mission was gathered for its annual meeting. We met in the brand-new Nurses School Building in Chun-ju. Fifty or more missionaries and their children heard one of our newest missionaries bring a fine lesson to our hearts from the book of Acts. Then there was the reception into the full fel-



lowship of the church ~~in~~ of two boys whose father, grandfather, and great-grandfather have been missionaries. Then we all joined in the Communion, renewing our relationship with our Lord and with our fellow Christians. The moment of silence following the benediction was rent when one of our number (Dr. Paul Crane) rose and announced: "The local American Military Advisor has just told me that North Korean troops invaded South Korea early this morning. They are expected to have a quick victory. You must provide for your own security ~~and~~ and listen to the radio for instructions about evacuating."

The long awaited yet unexpected announcement was the beginning of feverish preparations, to leave. It is not easy to say good-bye to co-workers, to leave work--the investment of money and lives and love, and to ~~walk~~ walk out of homes, leaving furniture and possessions for robbers and vandals. On Tuesday morning as the main body of the Mission climbed into cars and jeeps and trucks for the long two day trip over rocky roads, and high mountain passes, through country infested with Communist guerillas, to Pusan and all the uncertainties that lay ahead, not a few were glad that our last moment together as a Mission group had been for the communion of the Lord's Supper. And not a few of them, who, in various places, will this day be partaking of the Lord's Supper, will think with gratitude of that moment spent together on June 25th.

IV. A Communion on the Eve of Battle. Just one Sunday later found most of the Korea Mission of the Southern Presbyterian Church in an army camp in Japan. The hopelessness of the war, as North Koreans rolled past Seoul, had been changed by the sudden action of the United Nations. On Sunday morning as we walked to the post chapel for church, we passed G.I.s manning artillery batteries hastily placed around the camp. Loaded trucks and jeep rumbled by. Overhead passed a stream of great transports and bombers and roaring jet fighters headed for the Korean battle front. The soldiers were feverishly preparing to take off for Korea, attendance at the chapel was understandably small, and two of the men present were called out during the service.

The chaplain was not a Presbyterian and his form of serving the communion found some Presbyterian missionaries with stiff knees, but again we had the privilege of taking part in this sacred service, along with some of our fighting men, who knew they would soon be in the bitter desperate battle. Today in that army post, and in other army posts, and on the battlefields of Korea, our men are gathering to worship their God and many will no doubt share in this world-wide communion service. It is great to be a part of a nation whose fighting men have the privilege of worshipping even while engaged in brutal war, and many of whose leaders recognize that not the carnal might of man but the arm of Almighty God turns the tide of battle.

God give us the sense of a world-wide fellowship with all who believe that God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son into the world that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. We are one this day with thousands of new Christians in new churches, with the poor and outcast and diseased, with the missionaries who fight under the banner of the cross, with the soldiers who fight under the banner of the United Nations, as well as with those sitting in the pews about us. May we again reconsecrate ourselves to our Master whose death and resurrection inaugurated the fellowship to which we belong. and whose Spirit today is moving in the world and --

