

Message for taping. Jan. 1974

Greetings from Chunju, Korea. (You in the home church can thank God for the privilege of participating in the changing of the course of history in lands such as this where exciting events prove that God is bringing people who hitherto have walked in great darkness into the light of salvation in Jesus Christ.) Our purpose as missionaries, and the most important reason for the existence of the church, is to witness to Jesus Christ, to bring all men to repentance of sin and faith in Him as giver of salvation and Lord of all life. For us there is simultaneously boundless joy in proclaiming this good news and a terrible urgency lest some perish because we have failed. Jesus said, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him."

Nowadays the church is often maligned, yet no one has ever improved on it as God's instrument to accomplish His purpose in the world. We believe that God is using the church in America to witness to the Gospel of salvation in Christ. (Your missionaries know that the young church in the lands we serve are extensions of this same body of Christ and that our primary function is to continue to plant churches where the Gospel is proclaimed, sinners are saved, gathered into fellowship, and set forth to live and witness and serve for Christ in their communities. 10,000 church steeples in Korea today are visible proof of the power of this gospel.)

(Everywhere in rapidly developing modern Korea, Christians are at the forefront in business, industry, education government.) Visitors are amazed by the material transformation of Korea. Skyscrapers and apartment complexes crowd Seoul with its 6 million people. ~~xxxx~~ Paved expressways span the nation where once were muddy ox-cart trails or dusty gravel roads. Oil refineries, power plants, and factories turning out everything from transistors to trucks spring up everywhere. The new community development projects are modernizing village life in the country side. (The price of progress may be obedient submission to edicts from above, yet nevertheless the results are astonishing.) In this revolutionized situation, Christians are often not only leaders but voices bringing Christian principles into play. (Less than 10% of the population are Christians, but this is a collective conscience for righteousness and justice and human rights which plays a significant role in the development of a young nation.) We are happy as missionaries to have a small part in all this.

First of all the Hoppers are a man and wife team engaged in rural evangelism. Our city of 300,000 is the center of a province where 2,500,000 live. Most of them are rice farmers and it has always been our goal to establish a church within an hour's walking distance of everyone. In some areas this goal has been reached. In our 25 year's service we have seen the number of churches double once and then double again. They are organized into 4 Presbyteries. We work closely with the evangelistic committees of two of them in planning and establishing new churches, supervising their development, and assisting in every way possible. Many have reached the point where they can care for themselves, but others still need our assistance... particularly those in remote mountain valleys or in fishing villages by the seacoast where there is much poverty, less education, and hence slower development. We are assigned a couple of dozen of them to supervise.

To visit all these places regularly calls for careful scheduling. Saturday morning after breakfast sees us pulling out of the city in a Land Rover towing a small travel trailer which we have used nearly seven years over

some of the roughest roads in the world. Before lunch we park our bedroom on wheels in a distant village and are ready to go to work. All afternoon we visit from house to house, perhaps in 4 or 5 villages adjacent to the church. The local evangelist and a deacon or so accompany us, and behind us trail perhaps 75 children curious about these Yankee Pied Pipers. We concentrate on non-Christian homes, or those where there is a prospect of leading non-believers to Christ. We carry Gospels and tracts to distribute. As a couple we are free to enter any home, and many village women have learned to look forward to the visit of a missionary lady with the team. When all are out at work, we go to where they ~~xxx~~ are gathered in the fields to transplant rice or to thrash grain. Often there are those who are sick or in need of medical attention, and we encourage them to visit our Medical Center.

Before the evening service, Dot and my assistant hold a children's meeting. Using pictures or flannel graphs she tells Bible stories to the hundreds who pack into the little churches. When I see them surging out afterwards, I am reminded of the circus trick I saw years ago where endless numbers of clowns kept ~~climbing~~ climbing out of the same old Ford Automobile. Meanwhile in a nearby home or in the trailer, I examine candidates for church membership to discover the faith and Biblical knowledge of new Christians. Records show nearly 8000 such examinations in 25 years. During the evening service I preach, hold the sacraments and select the new officers as needed. Often these services do not begin until nine o'clock or later and we are tired when we drag back to the trailer.

Work in the city is equally varied. With a Korean minister as editor we publish a small magazine sent to all churches of our denomination to bring pastoral helps to them. Like most projects of the sort, production costs keep rising faster than our income, but so far the Lord has provided and 10 issues of 60 pages each are produced each year. Frequently I am asked to preach in city churches, or at the 35th Korean army reserve division where the chapel is usually packed with over 500 men. Considerable time is taken with membership in various Presbytery committees and serving as chairman of the joint board of two seminaries, one for women here and the other for men in Kwangju, where ordained pastors and directors of Christian education are trained for the 6 million people of this part of Korea.

During 1973 a high spot was the starting of a new city church. Chunju is growing by 25,000 a year, mostly people from rural areas. Both for the Christians among them and the larger number of non-Christians we need new churches. In June we purchased a small tract of land in a section where there is no other church. My assistant has been holding services there since July when he started in a tent. By Christmas we had erected a fine brick building and had about 75 adults plus 150 children in the Sunday school. My assistant, Mr. Ahn Young-mo is taller than I. He grew up in a Christian home. Both he and his wife are seminary graduates. His winsome smile and gracious manner is already attracting many into the new congregation which we hope within this year will become self-supporting. Meanwhile, in 1974 we are putting out attention to yet another new city church. In a middle-class residential area a small group of college professors, government workers, etc. have already started meeting. Although a small plot of less than 4500 square feet will cost perhaps \$5,000 just for the land, we are moving ahead with our plans for the new church there too.

Church planting and the nurture of these new congregations is our business and it is an endless job. We are thankful for a wide open door, with no restrictions, and a people who are largely receptive. Given the strength and the necessary workers and money most of Korea is ripe for the harvest. We thank you for your support and ask your continued prayer that in a land where seed can be sown anywhere, we may rejoice to see a great harvest for the Kingdom of God.