



Light in the Darkness

Dear Partners in Ministry,

We bring greetings from Tokyo in the wonderful name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As we celebrate the gift of His birth we are reminded of the extent to which our world is still lost in the darkness of sin. Don't get me wrong, Japan is a very upbeat place. It is a relatively safe country with very low crime rates. People are kind, friendly and polite (sometimes to an extreme!). Compared to many other countries the poverty rates are quite low. We have great medical care. We enjoy the conveniences of world leading modern technology. There is no persecution of the church and we have complete freedom of religious expression. The weather is very pleasant. And the food is absolutely fab! Yes, we consider ourselves very fortunate and blessed to live here. We love it!

And yet, we are constantly reminded of a deeper darkness. For half a century after WWII the Japanese people were optimistic about the future. But it is a well documented and visibly apparent fact that people in Japan are no longer filled with hope and look to the future with fear and apprehension. Young people see dwindling job prospects. Couples choose to have only one child or even none, because they worry about not being able to support a family. Middle aged people can no longer rest assured that their employer will take care of them until retirement.



Elderly people face tough choices knowing that their children are unlikely to care for them. Increasing numbers of young people choose to drop out of society and shut themselves up in their rooms, often refusing to emerge for years at a time. And undoubtedly the most tragic manifestation of all this darkness is the ever increasing suicide rate. On average one individual chooses to die every 15 minutes; every hour, every day, every week and every month... roughly 35,000 times a year.

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. I John 1:5

This Christmas we are celebrating that light in several ways. On December 9th the student body at the Covenant Seminary celebrated Christmas with a time of worship, an absolutely hilarious Christmas pageant, and an extended time of fellowship and food.



On December 12th we joined members of Grace Mission Church, the congregation where Jim is on staff, in attending a city wide Christmas celebration, a joint program of all the churches on the north side of Tokyo. The highlight of the program was the heartwarming voice of Korean tenor, Jae Chul Bae. A rising star in the world of European opera, he suffered a complete loss of his voice due to thyroid cancer about 5 years ago. But through some cutting edge surgical expertise

and the miraculous hand of God he has returned to the stage and is an incredible inspiration. On December 19th we will celebrate Christmas at Grace Mission Church in our worship and with a shared meal afterward. Once again on the 24th they will be holding a Christmas Eve candle light worship. And finally, on December 26th Jim will be preaching there. Please pray that this small congregation will truly be a light in the darkness. Each member is inviting friends and acquaintances to these special events in hopes that those who have yet to see the light will get a glimpse.

After that we are planning a big of family time in the snow country. This is our first Christmas without Miles at home but we keep getting good reports from Colorado so we just carry on with him in our hearts and prayers.

May the light of God's love revealed in Jesus Christ fill your hearts this season as you celebrate the gift. And please don't forget that we deeply appreciate your prayers and gifts.

In Christ,

Jim, Hydi, Miles, Kendra and Eli Peterson

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