

Furoshiki Family Newsletter #1

April 2, 2020

Japan Adventures!



It has been more than 2 months since we arrived here in Japan. It has been a flurry of activities. Each week and each day with its own challenges and adjustments. I praise God for his timing on getting us here. Any later and we may have been delayed some time due to the coronavirus.

Japan has not been as severely hit by the coronavirus as other places. Things are fairly calm here, we have not seen a lot of cases of coronavirus. The shops are open, cafe's are full, the language school I am attending talked about closing, but it was still open through March 18th. The public schools let out about 2 weeks early. A limit on some paper goods and masks are hard to find, but it seems as if it is business as usual.

We are all healthy here, I praise the Lord for some of the comfort that there have been no deaths of children 0-9 years old. It gives me some peace, and the Lord gives me the other 99%.

We are at a park right now, our children need outside time to run, play, dig, splash, "fish" with sticks in the pond, chase turtles and ducks, and generally be children exploring and discovering God's creation. We found road eggs here in the pond, we've seen great white egrets, large billed crows, and this morning, some kind of krill was washed up on shore that we returned to the water.

There are a few church families with children at similar ages, but not a lot of English. There is a neighbor girl that speaks very little English, but for the purposes of playing, no common language is necessary. The neighbor girl's dad and I have been meeting, he's been practicing his English, and I, my Japanese, and we have touched on a few good topics, but at arms length.

Religion is seen as something to be worried about here. In the 1990's a religious group did some bad things in Tokyo, and for the last 30 years, the Japanese I talk to, see religion as something to not be trusted, and almost even dangerous. The scriptures say we need to live our lives as a light on the top of a hill, not cover it with a basket, but also not to force it on them. I am always learning about patience (a life long lesson God is teaching me).

I finished a good book in the first month we were here. One in which the Lord put on my heart, which I finally bought the week before we left, *Evangelizing the Celtic Way*. The Celts were a pagan island nation that did not have the Christian background or a Jewish foundation, and the past missionaries were still able to preach the Good News and change all of Ireland forever. Which may sound similar to our current situation, and I assure you it is. It had a lot to say about people, community and how to interact with a country of non-believers.

Another notable thing is a topic that has always bothered me, even as a non-believer. It always seemed the saints went around renaming old healing springs, wells, sacred places, etc. with

"Christian" names, what seemed to me a kind of Roman imperialism or a "Christian Colonization". This book went into more detail about how if you just rename it, or knock down sacred sites, the locals would set them back up and ignore the crazy foreigner renaming things. It wasn't the missionary that was doing these things, it was actually the locals, who had the authority to change things.

There are plenty of temples and little shrines here in Japan, and we could easily do similar things, but the locals would just as soon put up a new one in its place. It's not the temples and shrines that receive the worship that are the larger problem, but it's the hearts of people that worship them that need to be changed. If we can introduce them to the Creator of Creation, and his loving Son, they can start tearing down the shrines they have built in their own hearts with the help of Christ.

We are not here to westernize the Japanese, to replace their idols with other idols to worship at their many sites. We are not here to impose foreign rules and customs to the Japanese. We are here to love them and serve them, as Christ teaches us; to be selfless, to be concerned about others, before ourselves. Christ gives us this clear picture.

We do this through what Young Life calls 'Contact work'. Just get in contact with, hang out, share a meal, play games, teach English, & just talk to them. When we are truly transformed by Christ, people will see it in our walk, they will see a difference in us, not one of rules and regulations, but of the freedom and love that pours from us, that which we receive from Christ. When the people see how we are different, they will ask questions, the Holy Spirit will prick their hearts, and we are only to point them toward our Holy Good Shepherd.

I praise God for those praying for us. You are in our hearts and prayers always, especially with the days we are living in. If you would like to know how to more specifically pray, don't hesitate to reach out and ask about those things the Lord lays on your heart, or if you don't know what to pray for, let me know and I can think of a few specific things and people that I would like people to pray for.

Please also let us know if we can pray for anyone specifically, we know there are a lot of things happening in America right now, let us know how to specifically pray for you.

Blessings from the Father to all of you,

Jed Irwin and Family

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Follow my wife on Instagram for more pictures of our adventures: Kara Irwin (@knittingdragons)

