

October 2019

ADAIR UPDATE



Chasing sunsets

DEEPENING ROOTS

A challenge by our pastor

A few weeks ago, I (Roberta) was having a major case of Grass-is-Greener-itus. I wanted *out* (yes, I still experience “acute culture tension”). That Sunday at church, after helping lead the kids in a silly song downstairs, I plopped down in the back row right as our pastor said this: “A few decades ago, I sensed the Lord reveal to me that my main witness wasn’t going to be in giving verbal presentations of the gospel but would be through being rooted in the specific neighborhood where God has placed me.”

Rooted. I was ready to uproot and skedaddle, yet that part of the message felt like a clear invitation from God to remain and be present in my neighborhood and church community. We sometimes talk fancy about “planting a church,” but I often forget that I, too, need to be planted, present, and rooted.

Sometimes I feel so small when I look at others who can share impressive numbers about how many people they’re discipling, Bible

studies they’re leading, dinners they’re serving, volunteer groups they’re a part of, or creative things they’re “doing.” Sometimes the idea of planting a church seems so impossible, so huge in this community that seems to have very little interest in turning away from Shinto-Buddhism. Yet perhaps I’m overthinking it - at least in this stage and in this season. Maybe this smallness is actually an invitation to meaning and connection - to being rooted.

Sometimes I still want to trade my dysfunctional community for another dysfunctional community. I still occasionally want to impress others (and myself) with numbers and “stories of life transformation” in order to feel valuable and important. I still catch myself comparing, being competitive, and getting really cynical. Yet I want to seek to be rooted in Christ, in my family, in the physical space where I live, and in the spiritual family he has placed me. Please pray for me that I would grow in this area.



After a few days of rain, our boys enjoyed puddle jumping while we tried to catch the sunset. What time is the sunset in Miyagi in October?

- A. 5:17
- B. 6:06
- C. 7:45
- D. 8:14



OVERLY SATISFIED

What does the gospel mean for people who think they're ok

I (Roberta) was at an evening prayer meeting recently when our pastor asked the 3 or 4 of us sitting around the table, "How do we share the good news of Christ with people who appear to be satisfied with their lives?"

Why so few?

We are often asked (and wonder ourselves) why so few Japanese people have become believers after centuries of various forms of evangelism and discipleship. We have heard many theories ranging from territorial spirits to mistakes in translation to ineffective methods. Even after being here for 7 years, I find this question baffling and even overwhelming.

I honestly marvel from time to time about what Christianity has to offer people who are incredibly considerate, have a good work ethic, care for the environment, respect the elderly, and think about the group before themselves. I was struck at the beginning of this term how most Japanese people in my life look like they have the fruit of the Spirit much more than I do even though they don't know Christ. They have the appearance of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

What is good news?

Yet every once and awhile, the curtain comes back and I see behind the *tatema* (the external self-presentation). People around us are burying significant hurt from being betrayed, experiencing completely fractured family relationships, and feeling all kinds of pressure and pain. Even so, many still give off the appearance of satisfaction (or simply not wanting to change). What does the gospel mean

to Japanese people? One thing I keep thinking about is forgiveness.

Forgiveness

When we know Jesus and understand our need for the cross, we experience (even if we can't comprehend) forgiveness and reconciliation. This allows for the miracle of new birth - and also allows for forgiveness among people, too. From what I understand, there is no mechanism for forgiveness in Japanese culture. Yes, gifts can be made and mediators can help do damage control. But if one truly messes up, the relationship is totally broken (in extreme historical cases, *hari-kari* was a way to restore honor through ritualized suicide).

What I want our friends inside and outside of the church to understand is that forgiveness is central to the gospel (and it is something I need to both seek and give more myself). We don't save ourselves through *gamon* (a persevering effort - this idea is huge in Japanese culture), being good, or manufacturing fruit of the Spirit. We are invited into a relationship with the Creator of the universe and into a family of believers - forgiven, accepted, and made new.

Please pray for our friends who appear satisfied with their lives, that they would become increasingly dissatisfied and curious. Please also pray for our Japanese partners as they are engaged in walking with people through very real forgiveness issues and are teaching people proud of their self-reliance to learn to be submitted to and rely on Christ.

We are so thankful for your prayers and partnership,

- R, R, J, B & A



Partner

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Specific Prayer Points

- Robert as he adjusts to his new role as Field Director of our mission (began officially on September 1st)
- Robert has several trips during the fall: health and protection for everyone in our family
- Friends, neighbors, students, etc. to turn to Jesus
- Grow in learning what it means to be planted as we seek to be a part of planting a church

Contact Info

Robert radair@asianaccess.org
 Roberta roberta@asianaccess.org
 Address: Robert & Roberta Adair
 985-0004
 Miyagi-ken Shiogama-shi
 Fujikura 2-6-5
 Web: www.adairupdate.com