

HEARTS IN SEOUL



December,
2020



Hans



Gretchen

An Unsettled Respite



Abi, 23



Mike, 21



John, 18

Dear Christian friends,

Grace and peace to you, as this **unprecedented** year draws to a close. (...Aren't you getting tired of that word? Wish I had a nickel for every time a reporter used it—usually pronounced with solemn emphasis after a moment's pause.)

But the word **does** fit. The precedent-ality (made *that* one up myself; you're welcome) of 2020, coupled with the unpredictability and uncertainty of 2021, has left millions of people adrift in anxiety. Hopelessness and despair and lethargy are engulfing countries around the world. South Korea is no exception!

The Fall semester is over for university and seminary alike. And what a weird semester it was! Unlike the Spring semester (where we were going week-to-week hoping that "this would be the week" we could resume on-campus classes) the Fall semester **began** with the knowledge that government restriction on schools would likely not relax before semester's end. New innovation and structure were needed, along with complex methods of measuring attendance, participation, projects (old-timers use to call it "homework"!), and examinations. The word "Zoom" suddenly became a staple in everyone's vocabulary. Flesh-and-blood students were reduced to tiny 1.5" squares on a screen; and as any of you active teachers out there have experienced, it is *really* hard to teach via videoconference and truly connect with students you've never met in person. Students and faculty alike were feeling the effects of physical inactivity, not to mention the mental strain of trying to maintain a positive outlook while having "no end in sight." I know I myself am feeling the effects of *sitting* all class long, instead of the constant "pacing" I'm accustomed to.

The physical malaise, coupled with the mental/emotional stress stemming from job-killing, relationship-stifling isolation requirements, has had a terrible impact on the young adults of South Korea. School is 'out' until the last week of February...but with so much uncertainty about what even next week will bring, what hope do they have? What can they "hold on to" when everything is changing?

Luther University engaged in a special workshop with Jesus University (I kid you not) to help in this area. (I know, I know...but Jesus University was founded sixteen years before we were, so they got first pick of names. But I don't think we did too badly with our choice, did we?) But the government of Jeolla North province (where JU is located) was urgently seeking solutions for the crisis their young adult population was facing. So just ten days ago, students and faculty from Jesus University and Luther University got together for three days of intensive discussion—the departments of Nursing and Social Work at JU sent representatives, while faculty and students of Luther's Theology and Counseling departments traveled the 2½ hours south to join them. More than 40 hours of (socially distanced, masked, and numbers-limited) small group meetings later, a slate of proposals was drawn up to submit to the provincial government for their consideration. Time and prayer will determine what comes of it, but...

What better way for Christians to interact with the troubled world we live in? We are hardly immune to the stresses and problems that are rocking the globe! But unlike any government intervention, medical stopgap, or financial stimulus, what **we** can offer is hope that can't be shaken by earthly events. We **know** where the future will lead us, and it's a destination that will be ours no matter what happens in the meantime.

Fun Korean Fact:

In Korea, instead of paying monthly rent for apartments, a person will pay the landlord a large sum of money up front. Later on, if the tenant moves out, the entire amount is then returned to them.

I know it seems like the world we used to know is crumbling. It's certainly looking like there won't be any return to "the way things were." But I also know that the Creator of the whole universe is my good and loving Father. I know He's watching over my life, and He has promised me eternal blessing and joy. (And who's big and bad enough to change *His* plans?) I know that Jesus Christ, His Son, the almighty God Himself, has lived and died and risen for my sake. I know He's my wonderful Shepherd and Friend. So, with those things secure, and with His promise to always be with me, and that He'll never give me more than I can bear, why should I tremble over anything that 2021 might bring?

A blessed and peaceful new year to you all!

*Jesus, Savior, pilot me over life's tempestuous sea!
Unknown waves before me roll, hiding rock and treach'rous shoal.
Chart and compass come from Thee: Jesus, Savior, pilot me!*

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(See some of the pictures larger at trinkleinfamily.wordpress.com.)

Sibling Strip

I'll Be Home for Christmas

I had always heard those lyrics from that song, but I never really understood what they truly meant. Growing up, our family was always living together, and Christmas was always the same: Dad would spend his time writing Christmas sermons and printing out bulletins and we kids would spend our time practicing Christmas songs for the services and helping fold bulletins. However, this year was not like those years. For one, Dad no longer writes sermons for the services. Instead, he writes syllabi and grades homework. But things have changed for us kids as well. This year, I spent over nine months of the year in America, the last three waiting for my passport to be renewed. Due to COVID, the U.S. government halted many of their operations. Passport services was one of the items that had massive delays in service. So there I was, December 1st, sitting in Arizona having no idea what the holiday season would be like for me. However, God is gracious, and He sent me one of the best Christmas gifts I have ever received: the ability to spend Christmas with my family. While the Christmas celebrations were very different than previous years, God still allowed us to be together.

seemed more unstable and volatile than it has during this one. Things that in years past seemed stable and secure have begun to shake. For those of us who have never lived during a world war, it feels pretty unsettling—like being in an earthquake and having nothing firm to hold onto. As a Christian, it has been disheartening to see truth being muzzled and lies paraded as “truth.” I noticed that a common statement in many conversations this year was “I just want to know what is true.” Knowing the truth gives us security and stability. We want to know what is true based on **facts** and **reality**—not someone’s subjective opinion. And as Christians, we know that truth is not just some concept or idea that is in our minds or hearts. Truth is a Person—God’s Beloved Son—Who lived and died and rose again, is seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, and is coming again to judge the living and the dead. During this crazy COVID year, I have been so grateful for God’s Word—the one Book that is 100% true that points us to the one Person Who is 100% Truth—Jesus Christ. As we begin the year 2021 and the world around us continues to shake, may we plant our faith firmly on the Rock Who will never give way. As the hymn writer said, may we also say:

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus’ Name. On Christ the solid Rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand; all other ground is sinking sand. When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace. In every high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the veil. His oath, His covenant, His blood, support me in the whelming flood. When every earthly prop gives way, He then is all my Hope and Stay.

When He shall come with trumpet sound, O May I then in Him be found; robed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne!*

*I chose to use the hymn writer’s word here rather than the Lutheran Service Book’s word, “redeemed”, since this **is** our faith: Christ’s blood cleanses us from all our sin and we will stand before Him some day, robed in His perfect and complete righteousness, without blemish or wrinkle or stain (Ephesians 5:27).

Gretchen

John



Abi and Mike performing “What Child is This?” at Oksudong Lutheran Church



Merry Christmas; Christ has come!



Staying connected with Jael and Ezzie over FaceTime

Prayer Requests:

- For God’s peace that passes all human understanding
- For wisdom for the whole family in each and every decision
- For grace for John as he begins his next semester of college
- For health, safety and God’s provision for all of our loved ones
- For creative ways to fulfill our purposes here during this time

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You can also send your gifts to our friends at **Mission Central 40718 Highway E-16 Mapleton, IA 51034**.