

JAPANESE EVACUEES

One Japanese American writes a satire on the assembly center he was confined to. He looks into the future and prognosticates:

.....
Then I looked into the future,
And I saw a Jap reservation,
Brought from the deserts and the highland plains,
Tormented with suffering of million pains,
Condemned to loneliness, a cesspool of frustration,
Isolated and removed from the rest of the nation.
Crammed into barracks by so many head,
Government clothed and government fed.....
With children growing up, amidst flies and the dust,
To forget that we once held America as mighty and just.

There are many who see no future in the present evacuation movement. They have fatalistically resigned themselves to their fate - as prisoners of state. They dare not plan for the future because of uncertainty. What then remains out of the broken fragments of future hopes? Is there something that the Christian message can bring to these innocent victims of war?

I believe there is. No longer can individuals depend for their security on things nor the humanistic prisms of good will. From superficiality people must turn to something anchored deep - a living faith in God. And there is indication of earnest seeking and thought towards values in life and its ultimate meaning.

The reality of the Christian Community has been a burning revelation to us. Those in contact with the Christian Church do not think of themselves as isolated from America and destined to a future "Jap Reservation". We are aware of the stand taken by the Christian forces in America. Most noteworthy

The Christian Church Behind Barbed Wires

The topic for my sermon is a startling one. We might think it is European or has taken place in some other part of the world.

No, it took place here in this country during the last World War.

It resulted because of Evacuation. Three reasons: For safety of the people, fear that they were dangerous to welfare of country and the one honest reason, to take away their property and investments. Studies after the war have shown that greed had a major part to do with evacuation. Mistake-- indict a whole people.

115,000 people moved within three months to inland evacuation camps.

I happened to be in seminary. Went with the people from Seattle. To Fair grounds at nearby town -- to Idaho. The first year dust blew through the barracks. Camp not completed. No modern plumbing the first few months... A family to a room or a large family two rooms.

What did the people do? Maintained the camp, farm, taught in school system, dentists, doctors. Paid a minimum salary of \$12 to 19.

A great social experiment. Many had lived in Cacusian communities before. "First time I've seen so many Japs at one time." There were Eskimos who could not speak Japanese. Indians who were part Japanese.

Barbed wires surrounded certain areas of camp. But being in a desert area -- and because of fear of outside hostility -- no-one took a notion to get out.

Min Yasui's poem

As the months went on everyone felt that this was a mistake. The gov't. began to see the need for relocating these folk. They saw the need to use the available manpower within the centers. So the Relocation Program.

One of the great benefits of Evacuation was dispersion. For the first time the Nisei saw the country. He found opportunities in the Midwest and East which were denied him.

Another opportunity given was that of enlisting in a special unit in the army. ~~Thousands~~ Many a father enlisted. Reason... to prove their loyalty in spite of what had happened to them. The story is a familiar one.

But we are thinking of the Christian Church behind Barbed Wire.

Gov't. orders a united church. So a federated church formed - Baptist, Cong. Methodist, Presby. Holiness, Episcopal. Catholics their own.

Services in Japanese for the elders. In English for youth. Two services with 200 in each service.

You've heard of "mass" movements in other countries. Somewhat like it in the center. Many came to church. A popular thing. Many Buddhists. A number were converted. A sizeable group entered the ministry or other forms of Christian service. Kaz Kawata, of B. parents, is today in India as Sanitary Engineer under the Methodist Board of Foreign Missions.

This united work was a great experience. One of our projects was a mass choir of a 100 voices which sang at special services and were permitted to tour the outside on occasion giving concerts.

We divided our missionary giving equally amongst the denom. which comprised our group.

What the Christian faith meant to people in the center:

1. It helped them meet their problems philosophically and without bitterness. The older people thought of evacuation as a judgment of God... for the failures of Japanese to be better Americans. Very little or no bitterness among Christians as contrasted with non-Christians. One reason they had more opportunity for contact with other American Christians.

2. The experiences of evacuation taught us this truth -- that the only real security in life is a living faith in God. Not things, not even friends, but a personal faith. We saw people losing their ~~living~~ property and all of the visible supports of life. Many sold their belongings at a song. Many saw their friends fail them on the West Coast. But one who has a faith in God - who will work out his purpose in spite of the tragedies of life -- he is ready for anything. "All things..."

3. The Christian faith was our one tie with the outside world. Churches became increasingly interested in the plight of the people in the centers. Scholarships were made available. Lines of communication were kept alive.

During several Christmases I can remember the gifts sent by Sunday School children for our camp and other camps. This made Christmas a happy experience for the children.

Christmas at Manzanar. Tension, Shooting as result of mob. schools closed. But on Christmas the children in the Children's village and through-out camp enjoyed gifts. Love which came at first Christmas again brought peace to a camp at odds with itself.

Read testimony of Martha Higashida...

Today the camps are no more. Some closed. Others in Arizona given to American Indians. Other ~~far~~ farmlands developed given to G.I's.

The people after being dispersed have to a great degree found their way back home.

They have found different types of work. Discrimination in employment a thing of the past.

They have matured as result of experience. and I think are better Americans. They have seen America -- at its worst and at its best. They have seen gov't. make mistakes and seen it try to remedy the mistakes made. They have seen their white American friends betray them and then seen them discover their errors and seek to rectify the mistakes.

The Christian Church at work with the Japanese have helped them through a period of crisis. By its unbroken fellowship with the people in the center it has helped the people keep their faith in America and in their fellow men alive.

These of us who ^{went thru} experienced this experience of being uprooted -- & the separation by America -- & the attempt at rehabilitation & redemption later look back -- not with regrets but gratitude that we had been given a faith by which to live -- in allowing God to sustain us by Christ Church.