

Are the Japanese Seeking GOD?

By Timothy Pietsch

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SINCE returning to the United States in October, 1948, for special deputation work on behalf of the Lord's work in Japan, I have been asked by many: "Are the Japanese seeking God?" No! The Japanese are not seeking God. How can they? Most of them have never even heard of the only true and living God so how can they seek Him? Three times in the Bible it is stated, "No man seeketh after God." The Lord Jesus said, "No man cometh unto me except the Father draw him."



Pastor Sugigara preaching at street meeting in Japan. The Japanese will stand as long as one wants to preach.

No, the Japanese are not seeking God, BUT GOD IS SEEKING THE JAPANESE. In His control over the affairs of men, God has brought it about that this land once so difficult is now open as never before to gospel preaching. God is seeking those who will yield themselves to Him and their "members as instruments of righteousness" as those that are alive from the dead to bring the good news to these people. At this time God is especially seeking the Japanese, for He has laid it upon the hearts of many young people to go to Japan and take the message of the Lord Jesus to them. How we thank God for the many GI's who have seen Japan and the great need and have come home to prepare, many of whom are now ready to go back as missionaries.

Some of us who were in pre-war Japan are convinced that God had His hand in this last tragic conflict for a purpose: that the Japanese might be willing to listen to the gospel. In His great love God has operated on the terrible cancer of militarism and emperor-worship which brought such sorrow and bondage to the people. Now one is just as free to preach the gospel in Japan as in the United States except that as yet we do not have the free use of the radio in Japan, for all stations are still government controlled and no private stations have been permitted. The opportunity for preaching in Japan is in proportion to the missionary's relationship and nearness to God and is as great

as is his love for Christ. There are no direct hindrances to the preaching of the gospel from the Japanese government at this time. Never before has there been such freedom. Usually this freedom is not used for turning to God but to one's own wicked ways and devices. The greatest wave of robberies and murder that Japan has ever known is now taking place.

This last Spring a new young missionary brought with him a panel truck to Japan. On the side he had printed the words of John 17:3—"And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." He says that when he leaves his truck parked anywhere, upon his return he often finds people with paper and pencil writing down the words from the truck, "THE ONLY TRUE GOD." Though the Japanese have had millions of gods, they have never heard of Him before and their hearts are hungry, for GOD IS SEEKING THEM.

The urgent need that brought me home at this time, leaving my family in Japan, for three or four months special deputation work, is housing for missionaries and the starting of an evangelical Bible School in Japan. One of the requirements for entry into Japan is to guarantee to General MacArthur's headquarters that adequate housing is available. Japan, greatly neglected before the war by evangelical Christian missions, now has many anxious to go there. At present, we have seventeen on the field



Mrs. Timothy Pietsch playing organ at street meeting.

in Japan and four others affiliated with our Mission. Forty more are waiting to go out and by the end of next year, we are hoping to have a hundred new missionaries in Japan in the Scandinavian Alliance Mission. At the present time the Mission has only one house in Japan in which one missionary family is living. The rest are making shift the best they can. What shall we do with the forty more now anxiously waiting to come when we can hardly take care of those now on the field? Shall we tell them not

to come? Rather than that, our Board of Directors asked me to return home and present these urgent needs to God's people in the homeland. We feel it would be near spiritual suicide for the Christians in the United States to refuse the gospel to the people of Japan through neglect or for any other reason, as we did prior to the war when we sent scrap iron instead of Bibles and missionaries.

At this time, mayors of cities in Japan come to us as a Mission and ask us to send missionaries to their town. This does not necessarily mean they want the gospel, but they think it will raise the culture of their own town to have an American missionary there. How different is this attitude from that of pre-war days when some missionaries were asked to leave! We have to tell them we have no place to live, to which they say they will give us a building permit. It is extremely difficult for a Japanese national to get a building permit but they will give them to the American missionaries now. With a Japanese building permit, it is now possible to build a modest but suitable home for a missionary family or two or three single ladies, for approximately twenty-five hundred dollars. This can also be used for meetings. It is also possible now to buy land in Japan. Prior to the war Americans were not allowed to own land in Japan but now it is cheaper in U. S. currency than ever before. It is possible now to house all our missionaries for approximately fifteen hundred dollars apiece, and this would include the price of the land. What kind of a house could you build for a family here in the U. S. now for this amount? If we had tried to build six months ago, it would have cost at least ten thousand dollars at the old exchange of 50 to 1, but now with the exchange rate more favorable at 270 yen to 1 dollar, we have the greatest opportunity we have ever known for getting the gospel to the people with whom we so recently have been at war, and to whom our country sent battleships in 1853 in order to get them to trade with us and learn our ways.

Shall we pass by on the other side, as did the priest and Levite, or shall we, like the good Samaritan, inconvenience ourselves to help these who have fallen amongst thieves? Shall we not now give more than simply out of our abundance, but out of real sacrifice, for GOD IS SEEKING THE JAPANESE!