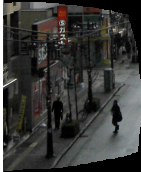




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march
2009



David Robison:

This is the good life.

Do not worry.

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:31-33

What should be on of the most relieving commands ever given turns out to be among the most difficult to obey. You might just as easily command a bird not to fly or a fish not to swim as command a human being not to be anxious about their finances. And yet this is exactly what Christ commands. Do not be anxious. Don't worry.

The present state of our economy only increases the difficulty of following Christ's words. Many of you are in the middle of a very difficult time. You're worried about paying bills, providing for families and keeping jobs. Perhaps you're living

paycheck to paycheck, or watching your savings and investments slowly evaporate. In situations like these, worrying seems natural, or even necessary; if you don't worry about putting food on the table who will? Ponder that question for a moment. Who will worry about your well being if you don't? The answer is in this wonderful little passage taken from the sermon on the mount: God will.

It's at this point that we should realize that when Christ tells his listeners: "Do not be anxious..." He is not just giving a command; He's also making an offer. Christ is not saying: "Be apathetic, stop caring about your problems, and eliminate your desires." That would be a teaching more in line with Buddhism. Rather, Christ is saying: "Don't worry about acquiring these things, because God will give them all to you!" Christ offers us hope; hope that the God of the universe sees every problem we face, evaluates each need we encounter, and provides in all situations. Christ commands that we do not worry because God knows exactly what our needs are. Instead of worrying he tells us to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.



This is a bird. If you don't get it, read Mat. 6:24-34

There is a reason these two commands are found in such close succession. It is impossible to seek God's kingdom and righteousness when we are worried about food, clothing and money. Few things will make us more ineffective in our service to God than anxiety. We naturally address our greatest concerns first. If we are most concerned with financial stability, then the

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A traditional Japanese wedding procession

Tomo's Column A Japanese Wedding

So I've been doing a lot of wedding planning lately over here in Tokyo and I got curious about what traditional Japanese weddings are like. Most couples in Japan have a Western style wedding at a nice, church-like building with a random white man dressed as a Christian priest who is hired by a wedding agency – you don't get to see many traditional weddings anymore. The only weddings I've been to are all Christian (i.e. Western style) weddings, and obviously, the one I'm planning right now is Christian too. So I did a little research on how people used to get married in Japan, and here's how traditional Shinto wedding is done.

First, the bride and the groom walk into the shrine led by a bunch of Shinto priests playing traditional music and a priestess who holds a red umbrella for the bride and the groom, followed by their parents and the family. After they enter the building, the bride and her family sit on the left side, the groom and his family on the right, facing each other. Then the main priest purifies everyone's body and heart by shaking a stick with a bunch of white paper pieces on one end above them. After that, the main priest reads the prayer and the priestess dances. Then the main event follows: the bride and the groom take turn drinking sake from the same three cups (small, medium, and large), where they tip the cup twice before drinking it down.

And then they exchange rings, the groom reads the vow, everyone drinks a little bit of sake together, the bride and the groom offer a "tamagushi" (a little wooden stick with white paper pieces on one end which symbolizes the bond between gods and humans.) to the altar. Then they bow twice, clap twice, and bow once. And that's the end of a wedding ceremony.

One interesting fact I found, the bride may be wearing either a "cotton hat" shown below (far left), or "horn cover" (in the middle). The "cotton hat" symbolizes virtue, because it hides her face so that only the groom can see it during the ceremony, and the "horn cover" symbolizes patience and obedience. Apparently, it was believed that women could be pretty fearsome when they get mad. The picture on the right is a mask called "Hannya" used for a traditional No dance, which represents a spirit of an angry woman. The "horn cover" is worn to hide the horns of the bride. So if any of you ever think about marrying a Japanese woman, remember she's hiding those horns under cover...



Cotton Hat



Horn Cover



Hannya Mask

Prayer Requests



- Pray for God to provide new monthly financial partners in these difficult financial times, so that Tomo and I will be able to move to Japan as scheduled in 2010. Currently we are behind in our fundraising goals.
- That wedding plans will go smoothly and that we'll be able to work out all the Visa issues concerning Tomo coming to live in the US after we're married.
- Pray for Tomo as she finishes up her senior year at International Christian University in Tokyo (which isn't actually a Christian school.)

If you are interested in supporting me, please fill out a yellow promise card and mail it to:

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