

18 - a Testimony of Jesus Abbey

by Ben Torrey

Ben Torrey shares his journey and calling to prepare for evangelism in North Korea through the Fourth River Project.

Duration: 9:32

Scripture: Genesis 2:10-14, Psalm 46:4, Isaiah 55:1, Ezekiel 47:1-12, Matthew 28:19-20, John 4:14, Revelation 22:1-2

Topics: "Testimony"

Description

In this sermon transcript, the speaker shares his personal journey and calling to establish a training center in Korea, specifically focused on preparing for the opening of North Korea. The speaker recounts how he initially had no intention of returning to Korea but felt compelled by God to take responsibility for the Three Seas Project. The project, known as the Fourth River Project, aims to research, educate, and train individuals for the eventual opening of North Korea. The speaker also shares a significant encounter with an elderly friend who emphasized the need for a fourth river, symbolizing the river of life flowing north to North Korea.

Transcript

Well, here it is, the last day of the month. Welcome. This is Ben Torrey here once again to share with you some of my thoughts about what God is doing and what He wants.

Over the past few weeks, as I've been discussing faith financing, I have referred to our work at the Three Seas Center. I think the time has come for me to share what it is that God has called my wife and me back to Korea to do. It goes back to when my father passed away in August of 2002.

At that time, various people asked me if I would be coming back to Korea to take responsibility for Jesus Abbey or for the Three Seas project. My answers were always that I had work to do in the U.S. and no call to return to Korea or the Abbey. However, obviously God had other things in mind.

If you're new to these Monday evening programs, I need to give you a bit of context. If you've already heard this, just take it as a review. Some thirty-odd years ago, Jesus Abbey began to lease a 120-acre tract of mountain pasture land from the forestry department to raise livestock.

After they began using it, they discovered that it was the point where all of Korea's watersheds converged. The drainage basins of the river systems that went to each of the three seas surrounding the peninsula

began on this land. Water flows from there into the Han River and the West Sea, into the Nakdong River and the South Sea, and into the East Sea through the Fifty Creek system.

Hence the name Three Seas, or in Korean, Sam-su-ryong, Three Waters Pass. Some years ago, a new law was passed to help the area recover from economic recession. It provided that forestry land could be released to certain types of development that would benefit the economy.

Jesus Abbey applied for a permit to build a youth training center on a portion of this land. This was the Three Seas Project. During this process, my father fell, injured his head, and eventually passed away.

My family joined me in Korea for my father's funeral. When all of the activities were over and we were preparing to return to the States, an old friend of my parents came to me with a word that he wanted me to pass along to my mother. He told me that he had been meditating on the description of the Garden of Eden in Genesis Chapter Two.

He spoke of the four rivers that flow from the Garden throughout the world. Then he said to me, but at Three Seas there are only three rivers. Something clicked in me then and I knew what he intended to say.

I responded to him that there was supposed to be a fourth river, wasn't there? He said yes, and I responded again, it's the River of Life flowing north to North Korea. He again said yes. That was his burden, that the Three Seas Center was to have a focus on North Korea.

I shared these thoughts with my mother the next morning as we were leaving. I didn't forget them, but I also did not think they had much to do with me, little knowing. Later that fall, as I was going about my regular business, I began to discover within myself a concern for North Korea that I had never had before.

A chance comment, a song on the radio, something totally unrelated would trigger an upwelling of sorrow for North Korea and its people. This had never happened to me before. It took me by surprise.

I even began to suspect my own sanity. Not really, but it was pretty odd. I began to pray seriously about what this meant.

I also recalled the comments about the need for a fourth river at the Three Seas. As I shared this with my wife, we both sought whether or not the Lord was speaking to us about Korea and the Three Seas project. As I continued to pray and to experience this deep compassion for North Korea, I became aware of two things that I now look back on as words of knowledge from the Holy Spirit.

A few weeks ago I shared how the Lord spoke a word clearly and emphatically into my mind. This was nothing like that. It was more of a growing conviction that came over time.

The two things were both very new to me. The first word was that the doors to North Korea would open soon. This in itself is not a very revolutionary thought.

Many people think the same now, but back in 2002 it was a brand new idea to me. I was not very aware of North Korea or what was happening there. I had not really cared before this.

Yet as I continued to think, I realized that the opening of North Korea could come as abruptly as the tearing down of the Berlin Wall. It was the second word, however, that struck me deeply. This came as the thought that if the doors of North Korea opens, there would be hundreds, perhaps thousands of people rushing into the North, Bibles in hand to share the Gospel.

I realized that this could prove to be a disaster. The problem is that many people, perhaps most, would think that the task of evangelizing North Korea would be a simple one. After all, people would think we speak the same language, we have the same basic culture, and the people who have suffered under communist oppression all these years would be looking for deliverance and quickly turn to God.

I realized that things would probably not work out this way. In fact, lack of serious knowledge about North Korea at proper preparation could spell disaster for the spreading of the Gospel. I knew instinctively that there would be a great difference between North and South, a cultural and even linguistic chasm to be overcome.

It would be a cross-cultural mission, but not many people would realize that. In their uninformed, unprepared enthusiasm, they could very easily end up throwing up barriers to the Gospel rather than open the way of salvation to the people of North Korea. I understood that it is imperative that we learn all that we can about North Korea and its society.

We need to understand the history and culture, what has happened to society over the past sixty years, and even how the languages of both North and South Korea have changed during that period of time. In the four years since this realization, I've come to learn that the language gap, not to mention cultural and societal gaps, is far greater than I realized then. Not only are there enormous differences in vocabulary, easily understood, but there is a more fundamental difference in what is known as social linguistics.

North Koreans use language much differently than South Koreans do. Their usage is actually closer to the way Westerners use language. In fact, many North Koreans have told me that they find it easier to communicate with Americans in broken Korean or English than with South Koreans in fluent Korean.

What the Lord was showing me was that there is a great and urgent need to prepare for the opening of North Korea. Many people were engaged in acts of mercy, sending food and so forth to the North, caring for refugees crossing the border and the like. But no one was preparing for the day when anyone would be able to go in.

Or at least there was a type of preparation that wasn't being done and was critically needed. While there were plans to send teams and re-establish churches, efforts to collect Bibles and so on, these too would fail if there was a fundamental lack of understanding of the differences. As I shared these reflections with my wife, we thought back to our elderly friend's urgency that there be a fourth river at the Three Seas.

We began to wonder if this was not what God intended and if we were to have a part in it. Well, to make a longer story a bit shorter, over the course of the next few months I shared these things with my mother and the members of the Jesus Abbey as well as others. All confirmed that this was of the Lord and that I was to take responsibility for the pursuit of the Three Seas training center with a particular focus preparing for the opening of North Korea.

Consequently, in April of 2003 I launched the Fourth River Project to prepare for the opening of North Korea through research, education, and training. The Fourth River Project was to have its home at the Three Seas where everything was to serve this purpose, even our cattle ranch, but that's another story. So we moved to Korea to take up this responsibility.

Last year we got the permit to build the center with a timetable that we have to meet. At the Three Seas, in addition to the ranch and the Fourth River Project, we will also be building a youth training center and the

Jesus Abbey Global School that I've talked about before. If you are interested in more information you can go to our website www.thefourthriver.org that's the Fourth River spelled out as one word or email me at bentorey@thefourthriver.org I do hope you come visit us in our beautiful mountains.

Well, I guess that's it for now. Good night.

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