



Hearts In Seoul



Hans

Gretchen

Thanksgiving... in September?!



Abi, 22

Mike, 20

John, 17

Yes, September. A few days ago the entire country of South Korea celebrated their *Chuseok* (**choo**-sock) holiday. And while many tend to call it “Korean Thanksgiving,” there are some important differences between American Thanksgiving and Korean *Chuseok*.

Both are celebrated in Autumn—that’s true. And both are connected with harvest time. But while American Thanksgiving is tied to a particular day of the solar (Julian) calendar—it’s always the fourth Thursday in November—Korean *Chuseok* is determined according to the lunar calendar (the 15th day of the 8th month of the lunar year, to be exact). This means that the ‘date’ tends to bounce around a little on your daily planner. But one thing’s certain: by definition, *Chuseok* always includes the day of a full moon.

One other thing’s certain: there’ll be food. *Lots* of food. Traditional food; tantalizing food; succulent and abundant food in dizzying array; food with exotic names like *songpyeon*, *yakgwa*, *yugwa*, *dasik*...and *Spam*. Yes, Spam! Koreans LoveLoveLove *Spam*! (It’s a long story but it has to do with the Korean War.) Special, extravagant gift boxes containing tins and tins of Spam, reposing in velvet lined luxury, bedeck the shelves of the classier grocery stores.* Alas, the one thing conspicuously missing from their food fests is **turkey**. Can you believe it?? As a matter of fact, at *American* Thanksgiving time, turkeys are harder to find than three-dollar bills; Korean grocery stores simply don’t stock them. Thank the Lord for ILC—International Lutheran Church in Seoul—which hosts a turkey dinner for all us expats!

Where was I? Oh, yes: differences. *Chuseok* spans three days, while American Thanksgiving is only one day long, unless you count things like Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday. Still, whether you’re in Seoul or Springfield, you can count on holiday traffic jams. You see, in Korea, *Chuseok* is a time when well-nigh everybody makes a pilgrimage to their ancestral towns. This means that Seoul is startlingly empty (great time to sight-see!) but mind-numbingly difficult to get to if you’re from anywhere else. Trust me—and remember I lived in both New York *and* Los Angeles—the *Chuseok* traffic jams are far and away the worst I’ve ever had to endure.

Why do so many people feel compelled to drive so far? This is the biggest difference of all between the two national celebrations. While American Thanksgiving was instituted as a harvest festival giving thanks to God, *Chuseok* has roots in shamanism and similar religions. People travel to their ancestral homes to pay respect to the spirits of their ancestors and give them thanks for their blessings. On *Chuseok* morning a memorial service called *charye* is held in the home, where special foods and rice wine are offered to the ancestors;* this is often paired with a *seongmyo*—a visit to ancestral graves to show thanks, appreciation, and respect. That’s why English interpreters tend to translate *Chuseok* as “Thanksgiving.”

Now, I will be the first to admit that for a huge number of Americans, *our* Thanksgiving is no more than a day for overeating and watching TV sports. But no matter how hard they try, nobody can change the reality of what Thanksgiving started out to be: a time for offering humble thanks to the living God, who is the *only* source of good harvests. Every good and perfect gift comes from Him! (James 1:17) And what a privilege it is, to be able to serve Him here in Korea, and bring that good news—that truth and perspective—to the students I teach, many of whom are not believers! God grant that there is a harvest at LTU, also: a bountiful harvest of souls won to Him through the precious Word of God, spoken faithfully and lived out clearly.

...And by the way, this *Chuseok*, I know what I was thanking Him for: all the wonderful people like you, who make it possible for the Trinkleins to answer His call to this ‘far-away’ land! God bless you richly, as only He can!

*See photo section...also, to see some of the pictures larger, go to trinkleinfamily.wordpress.com.

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A note from Gretchen

This past month or two has been very educational for me in a couple of ways. First in the natural realm, I began physical therapy at a different clinic in Seoul. Their methods are more like American P.T.—my therapist is doing muscle stretching therapy on my hand, arm, and shoulder. He suspects I had some muscle and nerve damage from my weeks in the splint and cast, but thankfully there has been noticeable improvement during the weeks that I have been working with him. Praise the Lord! I have learned so much about how fearfully and wonderfully made we are—how our bones, muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, etc. all work together to help us move. Thank you for your prayers!

The second lesson has been of a more spiritual nature. Let's just say I "signed up" for **Korean Cults 101** without realizing it! Remember the group I mentioned in the newsletter last time? It quickly morphed into a "Bible study" (which at first seemed really exciting and encouraging), but as the weeks progressed I realized the "teacher" was injecting some strange ideas in between the truths of God's Word. She used only the Bible, but seemed to be twisting words around to support her strange ideas. I kept raising my hand and mentioning other Scriptures that I felt were more in line with the truths of the Bible.

I still was not really aware of anything malicious, until she began to toss in comments about how she did not believe I was born again, since I did not have a complete knowledge and understanding of the Bible (especially the book of Revelation), which she claimed to have. I did not immediately realize it, but I suppose she was trying to undermine my credibility with the other people in the class, since I was challenging more and more of her ideas. Needless to say, I had lots of opportunities to share the Gospel in that "class."

Through an internet search, I soon discovered that this woman's teachings were among those taught by a false church called **Shincheonji**. It's a rapidly-growing cult that's spreading its poison all around the globe. I learned that they pull people in by inviting them to "Bible studies" (or other group classes, like music, art, singing, dance, language study, etc.) and then gradually turn it into a time of studying their own teachings.

Well, I am no longer attending the class. After telling the teacher her doctrine was the same as Shincheonji (to which she would not admit belonging), she said she could not "help" me anymore. As far as I know, the class has disbanded. I am thanking God for teaching me about this destructive cult in such an effective way. Now I pray He'll put the experience to good use!

Please pray for me as I continue to talk to some of those who attended. They got a strange taste of "Christianity" and I really want them to know the **true** Gospel, the **real** Jesus, and the joy of being born again as forgiven, redeemed children of God.

Gretchen

SIBLING STRIP

Hey, everyone! This is John. Since Dad's and Mom's articles ran a little long, there isn't much room for a true "strip". Instead, I am going to give a longer "Fun Korean Fact". As a lot of you may already know, I am a *huge* baseball fan. So when we moved here, I wanted to know if there were baseball teams here. Turns out, there are. They have a professional league with ten teams; one is located not far from our apartment. Last year, we went to a game there to see how it was. I was expecting things to be mostly the same as in America (how much can you change the experience of a game that has the same rules?), but that wasn't the case. In American baseball games, cheers are not a huge part of the game and they are usually led by a person playing an organ. In Korean baseball games, cheering is almost just as big of a deal as the game itself. The stadium is split into two halves, one half for each team; and when their team is "at bat", a group of 4~5 cheerleaders comes out and leads the fans in song and dance. It was quite the experience the first time I went. However, I have since gotten used to it and I've memorized all my team's cheers. I still prefer the more laid-back way of American baseball, but it's fun to experience something new.

John



1. The whole family with the other LCMS missionaries in South Korea
2. Mike and John with two friends at a Korean baseball game
3. A Chuseok *charye* offering (see Hans's article)
4. Spam gift boxes as mentioned in Hans's article (The one on the bottom right is almost \$70!)

Prayer Requests

- Praise for the new Seminary class on Justification Hans was asked to teach—it's very rewarding
- Grace and wisdom for good time management
- For faithfulness and wisdom as Hans's responsibilities at LTU expand into new areas (more details next time!)
- Grace for those of us who are continuing to study Korean
- Diligence for John as he finishes high school this year
- Good spiritual fruit in all our relationships

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