

Tuesday, March 25

John 14:22-23

We will come to them

It is dangerous for me to offer encouragement and guidance without my resources nearby, but such is the setting this morning as I compose this response to John 14:22-23 as I find it in the New King James Version. The 'other' Judas asks how we'll see Jesus and Jesus offers a simple response: *We (my Father and I) will love you, we will come to you, we will make our home with you.* We Protestants, we Americans, we Christians from the West, we Christians from the North - we can scarcely fathom Christianity in China.

First, it is older than we imagine. The Jesuit missions of the Roman Catholic "Counter-Reformation" (as we Protestants like to imagine it) developed Christian missions all over the seacoast of China in the 16th century. Unlike some counterparts in Japan that got blotted out during the same period, Christians became a very minority part of the mix of China since then.

In the great swoop of Protestant missionary activity in the mid-to-late 19th century, China was one constant destination in the mix of 'places to go.' The usual mix of hospitals, schools, colleges and social service agencies developed to the point that Christians were appearing all over the eastern half of China when "we" lost to Mao and the Communists in 1949. And "we" thought all was lost - no missionaries, rejection of the pope's control for Catholics, closure and dispersal of leaders from all institutions, and in the worst periods clear persecution for any signs of Christian activity, the 'elimination' of Christianity from China, we thought, . . .

. . . until Mao was gone, and Nixon visited, and trade crept in - and we've been discovering Christians by the millions. Some are anti-pope Catholics and some are pope-honoring. Some are Three-Self Protestants and some are underground Protestants. Some even show signs of Orthodox or Pentecostal connections. How did this happen? Where did these Christians come from?

We (my Father and I) will love you, we will come to you, we will make our home with you. Thank you, God. Thank you for being greater than we imagine, than we give you credit for, than we control or compose or count in our analyses.

A Way to Pray - Generations

- * Start moving back to parents, grandparents, great-grandparents...
- * ...as far back as you can go...
- * ...remembering the faith (so far as you know) they celebrated.
- * Start imagining an equal number of generations following you...
- * ...asking God, "How will they have faith?"