

The Crumpled Napkin

by Chris Wilkins, Japan

I had an old fashioned donut and a pot of tea. I was at Mizudo (Mister Donuts) to study my sermon for Sunday. I walked by a woman who was also studying. I asked her if her book was a Bible, and she said, "yes." We talked a little, and then I sat down and got to work.

An elderly gentleman with a book sat down two tables away from me. I wrote a Scripture verse on a napkin. I excused myself for interrupting him and asked if I could give him a theme for the day while handing him the napkin. He graciously received it.

Later, the woman with the Bible was about to leave so I wrote the message again and asked if I could give it to her. Then a young lady came in and sat at the table where the elderly gentleman had sat. I prepared another gift offering, but she said, "No, thank you." I respectfully retreated and continued to study my sermon. I could do nothing for her – she is free to decide. How glorious; how tragic.

My tea was gone, so I left for the train station. As I walked to the platform I saw an elderly gentleman shuffling in front of me. I slowed my pace so as not to disturb him. When our train came, I followed him on so I could sit next to him. I did so at a respectful distance. There remained the one napkin – the napkin of rejection. I asked in my most respectful Japanese if I could give him a napkin with a message. He asked for further explanation. I read the verse to him. He said, "I know that. The verse is, 'God is love.'" I was delighted and was about to ask him about his church when he took the napkin, crumpled it up in a ball, and threw it next to me. I apologized for interrupting him and continued to study my sermon. He exited the train and was gone.

Three napkins – two accepted, one rejected twice. I felt the Lord remind me that my napkins were not in vain. Only the Lord knows how they will be used in the future. The Word of the Lord lasts forever!

"Kami ha ai de aru." God is love. Don't crumple it; don't throw it away.

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