

I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing (Ezekiel 34:26)



Most of Japan is currently in rainy season, and although the annual hydrangea festival in Nagasaki didn't happen, having again gone the way of any event that might cause people to gather, there are still plenty of our "rainy season flowers" to be seen – inside and out. The text above, however, is because of a comment from one of our university students. She told me that she is glad to have a class from me this year, because she remembers a message I gave in morning worship at our high school a couple of years ago about showers of blessing. I'm sure she's right, as the name of our institution, "Kwassui," means "living water" and I have talked around the theme of water many times, but I have to say that I don't remember that particular version at all. However, it was encouraging to know that something I said had made an impression. Often we never know if there has been any reaction at all, and we continue to sow seeds in faith.

Unfortunately, at the moment weatherwise we are dealing with deluges of destruction rather than showers of blessing. Rainy season started three weeks earlier than usual, but we are told that, statistically, that doesn't mean that it will end any earlier than usual, and as the typhoons increase in frequency as we head into summer, the threat of natural disaster increases. You may have seen pictures of the mudslide in Shizuoka Prefecture this past weekend, which reached speeds of 30mph, and destroyed everything in its path for over a mile, leaving four people confirmed dead and more than twenty currently unaccounted for. The area had just had more than its average rainfall for July in the space of three days.

So the news at present is focussed on rain and rescue, which at least makes a change, though not a welcome one, from COVID-19 and the "will we / won't we" situation with various aspects of the Olympics. The vaccination programme has been very slow to get started here, and as a high a percentage of the population is elderly, it's only recently that people of working age have started to be offered the chance to get vaccinated, unless they are in the medical or care professions.

As a high proportion of the church members are elderly too, worship is gradually becoming safer, but as in the UK we have had to respond to fluctuating danger levels. We celebrated Easter in church, but were back to closed churches by Pentecost, and now most of our local churches are open but working with shortened forms of worship. How short depends on the individual church, and if the minister remembers that the sermon is also supposed to be short – two of the ministers at a meeting I attended yesterday admitted that they tend to forget to be brief! At the same meeting we were reminded of a prayer concern. "Pray for Myanmar" probably

PRAY
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isn't something you were expecting to see in a letter from Japan, but we have a local connection through a church member from Myanmar. The news is not encouraging, with reports of violence, torture and killing, and we are asked to keep Myanmar and its people in our prayers. In the words of the request made by the Nagasaki circuit: "No matter how far away we are, and how powerless we seem to be to do anything to help, we can pray, and prayer is the resource that is always left to us until the end. Every individual's prayers are important. Please pray for Myanmar."

With thanks, as always, for your prayers and support, Sheila