



News and Current Events :: Jesus in the Rice Fields: China's Countryside Revival

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Video>

BEIJING -- Christianity is thriving in China. Even though sharing the gospel is illegal in the communist country, that hasn't stopped Christians from boldly proclaiming their faith.

CBN News recently joined one Chinese couple who are traveling the vast countryside to share the good news about Jesus Christ with their countrymen.

Exclusive Images of Revival

Duan Huilai said the images captured on his home video camera are proof that God is moving in China.

"This is the first time you are seeing pictures of Christians from the villages openly praising God," Huilai told CBN News.

Huilai, a Chinese evangelist, gave CBN News exclusive access to hours of video and pictures taken in dozens of locations across China.

The pictures show one thing in common: men and women of all ages being touched by the power of God.

"Everywhere I go, I meet people who are hungry for God and He is showing up," Huilai said.

Rural Life Challenging

Huilai and his wife are full-time evangelists. Since 2003, they've criss-crossed the Chinese countryside sharing the gospel.

"God called us to focus on the rural areas where life is often very difficult," Lin Aimin, Huilai's wife, said.

Difficult, yet simple in many ways. Huilai showed CBN News pictures of how people have been baptized in rural areas after they've accepted Christ into their lives.

"Sometimes I baptize them in a river," he explained. "Sometimes they are baptized in the back of a pickup truck. A couple of times I've conducted baptisms in the shower. Very often we just have to improvise."

Preaching Still Illegal

Sharing the gospel in China is still forbidden.

"I was arrested here a number of times," Huilai told CBN News as he pointed to a map of China.

Christian gatherings not sanctioned by the government are considered illegal.

"The government doesn't allow people who live in one city to travel to another city. We are mindful of the regulations," Huilai said.

Despite the government restrictions, China watchers say what's happening spiritually in the country is nothing short of remarkable.

"There are still masses of converts everyday in the countryside. It is very encouraging," said Peter, a man who has worked with China's so-called underground or house churches for decades. CBN News agreed to conceal Peter's identity to protect him.

"So many peasants in so many places are coming to Christ in large numbers," the man said, speaking from an undisclosed location.

"And the churches in many cases are maturing and getting beyond simple evangelism and reaching out to rural minority groups and unreached people groups," he said.

Mapping China's Christianity

It's a far cry from the dark days of the Cultural Revolution. Dr. Fenggang Yang is the director of the Center of Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University.

"At that time, all churches, temples, and mosques were closed and no public religious service was allowed," Yang explained.

Chinese government data and international surveys now report millions of Chinese people are flocking to religions like Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, and Islam.

But it's Christianity that's experiencing the most dramatic growth.

CBN News obtained a map showing the stunning picture of Christianity's explosion across China's cities, counties, and villages.

"If the current trend of growth keeps the current pace, I think it is likely in the next 30 or 40 years China's number of Christians could reach really a high number similar perhaps to the U.S. or Brazil," Yang said.

Signs and Miracles

Huilai said the preaching of the word of God in the countryside is usually followed by miracles and healings.

"People who could never walk before begin walking," he said. "The blind see. I've even witnessed a man being raised from the dead. The healings and miracles we see each time we travel are amazing."

Huilai is a walking miracle himself. In the late 1990s, he and his wife lived in Budapest, Hungary, running a successful clothing company.

"We were making lots of money and living the high life," he said. "But I didn't know the Lord. I soon realized I needed something more than material success. I eventually gave my heart to the Lord."

Brush with Death

Six months after Huilai gave his life to Jesus Christ, he was viciously attacked by members of a Chinese mafia group in Budapest.

He showed CBN News the knife scars on his back, arms, and stomach that he says serve as reminders of God's protection and faithfulness.

"I was stabbed over 50 times and almost lost my life, but I know God spared me for a reason," he testified.

And perhaps this is it: The opportunity to reach the remote parts of a great land with a message of hope and salvation found in Jesus Christ.

"I often preach in the government-sanctioned churches as well as underground churches and in both places we have witnessed the powerful move of God," Huilai said.

"Our prayer is that one day everyone in our nation will hear about Jesus Christ," he said.

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Bless and protect them LORD.