

Jesus Must Be Reborn

Hour One of a Four Hour Seminar by Rev. Tongpan Prometta

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Greetings to all. I thank God that I have this opportunity to serve him by sharing with you today. The things which I come to share today are things that we have done in churches in our denomination, the church of the Grace of God¹. These are not theoretical ideas I have come to teach. I want to share what God is doing in our churches. However, if anyone has any questions please feel free to ask.

Today I come to you to share about Jesus coming to Isaan. I will be speaking in Isaan² and for those of you who are from central Thailand who can't understand it, I would ask you to find a translator in someone sitting next to you. I don't speak Isaan simply because I want to preserve a language. I am not one of those people who want to be traditional or save cultures just to keep them going. No, I speak to you in this language because it is the best way to communicate to you, my fellow Isaan brothers and sisters.

I want to tell you from the very outset that there is no one correct way to share the good news or to plant churches in Isaan. We must use what best applies to our own particular situation. People come with two heads (two ways of thinking): one is the traditionalist. This type cannot change. They think that what has been done one way must continue to be done that way. There is no possibility of change and no growth. The second type is the progressive thinker, the new thinker. This type of person accepts that the world is changing and can make accommodations for change. Cultures change and our churches must adapt to those changes. We can't be traditionalists and expect our churches to grow. If we do not change our churches will die. We need to know how to adapt and apply new things to our churches.

We're thankful when we have 4 or 5 people come together for worship in our churches. If we have 10 or 20 we praise God. We never count on having large numbers. One of the members in my church said, "Teacher, you don't need to go around telling all these people about the good news. All these people are hearing and believing. Don't you think heaven is going to be too crowded?" That's being stingy about the good news! Afraid that his own place in heaven would be crowded!

As Christians we need to know what we believe. Some believers are asked, "What does it mean to believe in God?" They can't answer! "In that case," the inquirer thinks, "I won't believe since it must not be much." People get the wrong impression about God - that he sort of flies around but can't be described or known. Christians don't have the words because they haven't prepared themselves - they haven't studied the word.

The first thing we need to understand is about God. It is only then that we will be able to tell others about Him. A lot of preachers get tricked by the devil. They get convinced that the people they are talking to understand what they are saying. Preachers have a problem. They know a lot. Once a person knows a lot they start to think that others know what they know.

They preach, preach, preach! What do people really understand? Who knows! They just assume that people are going to pick it up from all that they are sharing.

There was once a preacher who had preached what he thought was a very powerful sermon. One elderly woman seemed to be so especially touched by his words that she began to cry. The more he preached the more the tears just rolled down her cheeks. Finally at the end of the sermon she came forward, sobbing as she made her way up to the pulpit. "Grandma, " the preacher asked, " Have you been convicted? Have you come to confess an area of sin in your life?" "No, it's not that" she answered, "It's just that your face looks just like the face of my husband who just recently passed away."

You see? You can't tell what people are thinking. He thought he was really connecting and all she was seeing was the face of a dead man. After that experience that man stopped "preaching" and became a *teacher* of the Bible. Teaching involves interacting, asking the listeners what does this verse mean? What difference will this verse make in our lives today? It is important to find out what people understand from the word. That is effective communication.

For this reason the churches with which I work do not practice preaching. Friends have asked me, "Why don't you invite me to preach in your churches?" I tell them it is because in our churches we don't preach, we teach the word. The important thing is teaching - clear understanding, good communication. I'm not saying preaching is bad. The point is after you have preached or after you have taught, do people understand you or not? If not then you need to change the way you communicate.

The first thing I would like you to understand today is the absolute necessity to have Jesus be reborn into the local culture. Jesus as a central Thai, a northern Thai, a southern Thai, an eastern Thai, or an Isaan person. Beloved, if Jesus were to be born here in Khon Kaen, what would he eat? ("Sticky rice!" answers the room). Wouldn't he eat bread? (NO!) That's right, Jesus would eat whatever the local people ate. What is the staple of life for Isaan people? Sticky rice! If a meal goes by and there isn't sticky rice, well... I think of when I went to America. I really missed our sticky rice. Their food is good there but deep down in my brain I still missed sticky rice. I just wanted to roll up rice, even just a little. Why? Because I've always eaten sticky rice! So if Jesus was born here in Khon Kaen I am convinced he would eat sticky rice. And Jesus would lom³ too! He would be the best kaen⁴ player around! He would be totally incarnated into the culture. So the first thing for us to understand is that Jesus needs to become one with the local culture. If we are in Khon Kaen, in Isaan, Jesus needs to be Isaan. Whatever culture we are in Jesus needs to be reborn there.

Take a look at Buddhism. A lot of people are convinced that Buddha was born in our country of Thailand. They firmly believe it! If we notice how Chinese people make their Buddha images what do they look like? They have this big growth out of the front like I do - great big bellies! The images look like the Chinese. If Indians make images they do it another way that looks like them. If Thais make them they look like something else altogether.

So if Jesus were to be born in Khon Kaen, in Isaan, he would take on the look of that culture. I would like to remind us of a saying by our present monarch, "The preservation of culture is the preservation of the whole country." If there is no culture what happens to the country? It can't survive. A nation survives based on its culture.

I just came back from a trip to Taiwan. There were two people sitting next to me. I looked at them. They looked at me. I smiled at them. They smiled back at me. Finally I asked (speaking in Isaan), "Where are you from?" since I knew from looking at them they were Isaan. "Nong Bua Lomphu, Father", they answered. We had looked at each other and started to figure each other out but it wasn't until we spoke that we began to *understand* each other.

Isaan people have a problem this way. They don't want to admit that they are northeastern Thai. Let me share another story. Our group started a ministry in Bangkok. We sent one of our group down there, Pastor Inchai, and for six months nothing happened. No one spoke Isaan - only central Thai. I told Inchai - since he is a good musician - take your kaen outside and play it up and down the street for awhile. So he did. (At this point Tongpan asked one of the church elders in the meeting to play a few measures on the kaen as a demonstration.) Inchai took his kaen outside and started playing. And people starting coming! They trailed after him as he walked along, asking, "Where are from? Where are you staying? Where's your place?" They started talking in Lao!⁵ They started talking to him and to each other - "Oh, I'm from Khon Kaen, how about you?" Before that they would only speak Thai but once they heard the sound of the kaen they opened up. You see, language shows which group you are from. For us Isaan people the sound of the kaen is deep in our bones. It is the sound of our people.

That is what we want Jesus to be - one of us. Thank God that today there in Bangkok there are 70 people coming together for worship. We need to use the local culture to bring Jesus in - as the speaker shared yesterday, Jesus needs to ride the kaen into Isaan people's hearts.

(Again, Tongpan asked that the kaen be played again and this time he sang a portion of an Isaan Christian Lom ballad to wild applause).

Now that you've heard that what did you think? It speaks to the hearts of Isaan people. If we listen to Isaan lom songs we understand. When I was a young believer I was taught to sing, (here he sings two lines of the hymn "The Comforter Has Come" translated into Thai). What did I say? What did it mean? I didn't know. It didn't make sense to me. The message needs to come in a way people can understand it.

(Here Tongpan sang a verse of a Christian Isaan ballad and people began to clap to the beat immediately). Did you understand that? People hear that and say, "OH! That's who Jesus is! That's what it's all about. I'm interested!" This is what is important - that Jesus be reborn in the culture - in the best things about the culture.

The best and most beautiful things, understand! Not reborn in the wrong things. For example, idolatry. There is none of that in Christ. Not reborn in drunkenness so that dog's lick your lips - no! We don't want the bad things; we want the best!

Today I want to share with you in these next few hours a way to lead people to Christ where they won't even know when they started to believe in him. In this way Christ will come deep into the heart of people. If we start by telling people, "You need to accept Christ into your heart" and work purely on an external basis it won't work! It needs to start from the inside and work its way out.

I hope you'll pardon me if I share about my earlier experience as a Christian. I'm not blaming the missionaries. They came from their farang cities and they didn't understand. After I

became a believer the missionary came to me and said, "Now that you are a Christian I have a suit and necktie for you. And here is a pair of shoes for you to wear." From the day I was born up until that day I had never worn a pair of lace-up shoes⁶ before. So I bathed and put on those shoes. I tied them on and tried to walk. Bam! I fell flat on my face. Why? I didn't know how to wear them. They didn't fit me either. They were big long farang boots. I don't blame the missionaries. They meant well. They wanted me to look good and wear shoes. But I didn't know how to wear shoes!

When we are sharing our faith with others we don't want to do it in a way that people don't understand or that cause people to follow in ways that are foreign to them.

Lots of churches complain of how difficult it is for them to bring people to Christ. We don't have that problem because we don't do it. We don't take people to Christ - we bring Christ to people. We don't have a problem in our churches of people not wanting to come to Christ or not understanding Christ. Christ is being reborn in ways they can clearly understand him.

The problem in our churches is people who make a decision to follow Christ and then don't grow. We can't help people grow fast enough. Spiritual maturity is important. Growing in the word is necessary for the growth of the church. Growth of the Christians comes from understanding. I would like to demonstrate again how Jesus can be reborn using the sounds of Isaan. Pon, would you please come up and sing for us? Listen and see if you can understand the meaning.

(Mrs. Pon from the LIFE foundation in Roi Et, came forward to sing another Christian Isaan lom ballad. Clapping started immediately. Someone picked up the drum and started beating, another the ching⁷. Several were dancing in the aisles. All applauded when it was over. Some cried, "More! More!")

Brothers and sisters, this is the way we worship in our churches. Some people hear it and say, "I want to send my whole family to study that way of worship." Fine, bring 'em on. "Those Christians dance nicely!" people say. Worship in this way brings glory to God and outsiders understand it easily.

Some foreign ways used in the church are very difficult for Thai people to understand. When they see people raising their hands and shouting "Hallelujah!" they just don't know what to think. When they see the way we worship (using Isaan traditions) they say, "Oh, those people are worshipping God!" It has clear meaning to them. I would like you to understand that we do the things we do for only one reason - to clearly communicate the meaning of the gospel. We do not do it to preserve cultural traditions. We bring Jesus into those traditional forms so people can understand him.

Isaan people have an inferiority complex. Other regions taunt us with, "Sticky rice eaters, bosom-buddies, who eat rotten fish."⁸ Isaan people hear that and are embarrassed. They don't want to talk about being Isaan. But thank God! Did you know that all the famous singers in Thailand are from Isaan? Other singers are not nearly as famous as the Isaan singers.

It's the same in Bangkok. If I speak Isaan in Bangkok I'm suddenly famous. Why? Because all the Isaan people are working there and they flock around me!

I would like to see the good news of Jesus spread to plant churches in all of the regions of Thailand. In order for that to happen we need to allow Jesus to be reborn in each of those regions. If Jesus was to be reborn in Nakorn Sawan province⁹ what would he eat? White rice. It just depends on the local culture. We want people to be able to see our worship and know, "Those people are worshipping God."

Do you realize just how much of Christianity is farang-style¹⁰ now in Thailand? If you want to see what an American church looks like it is not difficult. Put on a necktie and I will take you. You don't have to pay the plane fare. I went to America and saw their worship and thought, "This is just like our churches in the town of Udon." I'm not trying to say that the farang ways are not good. I just want to be able to clearly communicate the meaning to the local people.

We need to turn the world upside down. We want people to understand. Therefore Jesus must be reborn as an Isaan person. Not as a poor example either. If friends are drinking alcohol we might feel we have to do the same - NO! If they worship spirits we might feel we have to do as they do - NO! That is not what we're going to do.

(At this point some Isaan-style paintings of Noah were held up in front of the group).

Take a look at this picture. What do you think of this? This is Noah, Isaan Noah. Noah is on his way to the rice fields. God called Noah. Noah went to tell his friends what God was planning to do. If he was born today he would be telling the young people, "When you go and ride the motorcycle be sure to wear your helmets!" If he was talking to older people, "When you drive around buckle your safety belts!" If he was talking to pastors of churches he would say, "It's good you don't drink or smoke but don't eat the raw meat like Isaan people do!" (since that is what Isaan people do and get liver flukes.)

I was invited to speak on the 17th of November at the World Heritage Exhibit in Udon to share the story of Noah. The monk of the temple there saw these paintings and asked me to come and tell the story of the origin of the world in his temple! So I put the words to the music.

(At this point Tongpan began to chant in Isaan style, telling the story of Noah being called by God. Much applause and cheering. After this he did a sample of the same in the central Thai style which immediately had everyone clapping the beat.)

In this style it is easy to understand the story. God shared with me that a certain person, who was not yet a believer, was going to be a new pastor in the church. I started to share the Lord with him. "Oh, I've been waiting to hear this" he said. Today there are two monks who have left the Buddhist monkhood to follow Jesus in our church. We need to allow Jesus to enter into every corner of our neighborhoods.

You may share one way and I may use another. We all understand that there are many ways to catch fish. You can use a hook and line, or a trap or use nets or pump the whole pond dry and pick 'em up. If we bring people to salvation in Jesus Christ then we can all be thankful to the Lord no matter what the method.

Try saying this together with me, "Satoo!"¹¹ (Several people repeated it). Say it again together, "SATOO!" (Most everyone said it). "So be it" is the meaning. Satoo means "so be

it". If you want to say "Amen" go ahead but I don't use that. Others outside (the church) are not used to hearing it. Which speaks clearest and best expresses meaning? If you want to give praise to God say, "Thanks be to God." It expresses meaning clearly.

Every single day I want to meet a new person and I write his name down. Today I met a new person and I wrote his name down. Each month I meet 30 new people. We need to have vision and foresight as to where we are going to share next. With all these new connections I don't have any shortage of places to go and follow up.

One time I was riding the bus to Bangkok and there was a beautiful young lady seated next to me, very pretty. She was seated next to me but was leaning in the opposite direction as much as possible as if she was afraid I was contagious. God gave me some words to share with her. I asked her, "What newspaper are you reading?" She said, "Thai Rhat¹²" I asked her, "Have you heard the news about the person who died and three days later came back to life?" "What? Where is that?" See? You need to build some interest in other people first. "Tell me all about it" she said. "Where can I get that paper?," She put her paper down and started to ask questions. This is the principle - get people to be interested.

Planting churches and sharing the good news is the responsibility of all of God's children. Every one of us! I don't want to teach you this hour because all of you are teachers. But just ask God for one person each month. In one year you will have twelve contacts. Your church will grow. If you do your part, God will do his.

Many Christians listen to teaching week after week every Sunday and that's it. They hear the preacher and go home. Ever notice the water buffalo? It goes out and grazes all day and then you bring it back home and there it is still chewing on the cud - all that saliva dripping down. How many people are like that? They eat and eat and eat but if it doesn't change life and get shared it doesn't do any good.

Christians have a problem. Satan uses them a lot more than God does. Talk about the lottery and they've got lots to say. Talk about their husbands, talk about neighbors, talk about other people - what a lot of juicy chat! But talk about God - sudden lockjaw! Zipped shut. Not a word! Carrying a Bible to church, someone asks where you're going. "Oh, I was just going to get something to eat." Because we don't open our mouths nothing comes out.

If we want Jesus to be born again in us we need to share him with others. But we get lazy. I ask if people have shared with their friends they say, "What's the use? They don't believe it." Have you talked to your neighbors across the street? "Teacher, those people don't believe." We decide in advance that they won't believe. Our role is to share. Decide right now and pray that God will lead 10 people to you to share with this year.

Sometimes we have to serve in ways and at times not convenient for us. One day I was at home getting ready to go to a "Ning, Nong" comedy show¹³. I had already bought my ticket. An old man came riding up on a motorcycle to my house. "What did you come for, Grampa?" I asked. "I came to find you, teacher. I wanted you to come and pray for my two children. Both of them are crazy and I wanted you to come. I have to chain them up or they will kill people. I believe Jesus can help."

Well, I couldn't exactly say anything against that. This was going to be a better show than watching Ning Nong. But I didn't want to go. I was afraid they would kill me - two crazies

tied up with chains. I went into my room and closed the door. I asked for faith from God, "Father, I need your power. Give me your power." And off we went.

We went out to the village, the village of Yam Ka, and then out into the fields. There they were - actually chained up to a post. We went up to them and I prayed. "In the name of Jesus may these chains be removed!" I breathed on them in the power of Jesus and they were loosened.

Today there is a church in that village. This is only because of the power of God.

Brothers and sisters, we have to have a bold faith. I believed that God would not let me lose face for his sake. Whenever that happens I will stop serving God. Thank God that he has never let me lose face when I am doing his work. God has the power to work in the lives of even the very disturbed like those two. Even though these two were not completely healed of all their troubles, a church was born there because of them. However, they have never had to be chained up again.

That is our job - to allow the power of God to be reborn in the local culture and to spread out and do its job. There are a number of Christians who are afraid to let God loose to do his work. Another day I was planning to go out to my rice fields. I was going to go stay out there for three days to rest and sleep. I got there and I couldn't sleep. God didn't let me sleep. A man on a motorcycle came and found me.

"Teacher! Come and see my father. He hears evil spirits talk to him - nine of them! He's talking about going out and eating people. He's going to be driven out of the village. Teacher, I want you to come and pray over him. I believe God will heal him. The villagers are going to see this and they will also believe."

Hmm. What was I going to do? I left my field and went to my house and got a few things and went off with this man. Thank God, (the man's name was Buk), I prayed in the name of God and Father Buk was healed! No more evil spirits, not one! The man's son and the family became believers.

Brothers and sisters, don't put a stranglehold on the gospel. Allow God's power to spread out. Those who are going to serve God have to listen and have faith in him.

Sometimes God has asked me to do some things that I did not believe could happen. I was walking through the market one day and God pointed out to me a vendor chopping up roots; sitting and chopping, chop, chop, chop. "That one," God told me, "he will be my next evangelist. Go talk to him." That person was not yet a believer!

So I walked over to him. He never stopped chopping up those roots. I hadn't even started to say anything when the man looked up at me and said, "You came to talk about Jesus didn't you? I don't believe in him. They came by and announced all about it in my village the other day and I don't want anything to do with it."

God spoke to me, "Look at him! What a boldness! Wait and see how he can talk once he believes." It was true. God's power worked in that life. At first, he was strongly resistant. No matter how much I talked he would not accept. But I kept going back to him. In the end God was victorious. Today that man is the most gifted evangelist in his church.

Grandma Noo, from Nong Lak village, please stand. (A short elderly woman stood in the fourth row). This woman does one thing. She talks about Jesus. Wherever she goes she talks about Jesus. She goes to the doctor to get a shot but it's the doctor who gets an injection of Jesus. She asks the doctor, "Do you know where the needles come from? And how about all the rest of this stuff: the syringe, the medicine, the equipment? God gave it to you to use. Did you know that, doctor?" Because of her churches have been started. People have become believers because Grandma shares with them in the hospital. And so God has allowed Grandma to be ill quite often and to stay in the hospital so that others could believe. God has called her to be the evangelist in that hospital.

I share this to encourage us all to understand and believe that God is really with us! Sometimes we doubt. Is he really there? We doubt; we have fears. I want to thank God today for fifteen new brothers in the Lord. They are all in the Udon Thani jail. At first five became believers together. The policemen brought them to my house one day. I saw the police car drive up and I was really startled. I wondered what was going on! I was scared and asked why they came. The jail warden came to the door and said, "Teacher, I just wanted to come by and ask you what medicine you are using on these men. They've stopped drinking and smoking and they are different. What is it? Will you share it with me too?" Four police officials had come together with them. "Yes," I answered, picking up my Bible, "I have something that will help. You don't have to buy this medicine. It works for a whole lifetime and has no bad side effects." I read them from John 3:3: Whoever has not been born again will not see the kingdom of God. "Oh, is that it!" At that point three more believed and today there are fifteen altogether.

That is our task - let God's power work. If we stop what happens? We get lazy and the word doesn't go anywhere. Our job is to share the story. When we go out and work in the fields, do you meet people there? Tell them God's story. When you go out looking for fish, are there people around? Tell them God's story. When you collect grass for the buffalo, do you see people? Tell them God's story. Our role is to talk. Ask God, this year how many people do you want me to tell? You have to have a goal.

Can you do it? That is the main goal of the servant of the Lord. Ask God to do it through you. I don't want people to think, "That can't happen." When Jesus is reborn within us we have three inner changes. First of all, we have a new person we can depend upon. After this we have 2) new values and 3) new attitudes. If all three of these have taken place then external changes will start to happen. All of the external changes will come from the internal ones first.

Where is he? Father Bua from Dat Hai Village, please stand. In the past, people in Father Bua's village here used to call him Uncle Whiskey Jug¹⁴. Thank you, please be seated. A real drinker, smoker, everything. I never once told him he should stop drinking. He became a believer. He received a new person to depend upon in Jesus Christ. He could ask what he needed from him. You can ask him to help you in your areas of need. Don't start building up religion from the beginning. Start with believing in Jesus from the very first day.

The first day I became a Christian I was told, "You're a Christian now, you must stop smoking." So I stopped but I nearly died from it. I was too afraid that I wasn't going to be saved if I smoked. It is more important to teach our church members about the internal change first. When we have that new source of dependence, of power in us, then we can let Jesus do the external changing.

In the past who did we look to for help? The spirits. You need to understand, Isaan people like to mix religions together. Buddhism, Brahmanism, animism, spirits of the city, spirits of mother and father, all mixed together. So here comes teaching about Jesus and they just add him in there with all the others. If we just teach externals (religious practice) then Jesus is just one more along with all the rest. If we teach internals - focus on values, attitudes - then the spirits are taken out and replaced with Jesus Christ.

Heart values are extremely important. What is our normal heart value? Self first. If we are a child of God we start to let God and others come first. Changes will happen. When values change from the inside then outside behavior changes. For example, wearing motorcycle helmets. In the past, if there were no police around our church leaders would leave the helmet in the basket of the motorcycle. When they saw the policemen ahead then they would put it on. The only reason they wore them was because they were afraid that the policemen would fine them. In reality, the helmet law¹⁵ is to protect us but they don't think about that. They just think of how uncomfortable it is to wear a helmet. They think only about what feels good. Once we are changed from the inside we will start to understand that there is a better reason to wear a helmet than just being afraid of a policeman's penalty.

We have to look for the ways that we can encourage Christ to enter in to the lives of our friends. The problem is often that we leave no room for Jesus. We're too full of ourselves and other people. If we ask God daily to change us he will do it.

Does anyone have any questions? If you do not agree with what I'm doing no problem. I'll just keep on doing it (laughter). Actually, if there are any suggestions on how to allow Christ to enter in to people's lives we would be happy to hear them. It is our job to do this. Do you think you can share God's love? If you say you can't then you really can't. If you decide this is what you should do, you can.

One day I was driving to Nong Khai with my son. We saw a man pushing a motorcycle along the side of the road. I asked my son if we should stop and help and he said no, because there was a gas station just a few meters up the road. On our way back from Nong Khai we saw the same person farther up the road still pushing the motorcycle. So we stopped. "Why are you pushing your motorcycle?" "I don't have any money to buy gas," he said. "I waved at several people to stop and help but no one did." He hadn't waved at us but we stopped. I didn't have any money with me but I did have some from the church so I said, "Here is some money for gas, but it isn't mine. It belongs to Jesus." "Jesus' money? Am I allowed to use that?" he asked. "Yes, you can use it." He was afraid that Jesus money wasn't transferable in this life but in the next. So I gave him 30 baht.

"Thank you, Father," he said, "If there is anything I can do for you please call on me." I asked what level of education he had graduated from.

"I graduated S.B.T.N."¹⁶

"S.B.T.N.? What's that?"

"Suan Po Tom Na," (Jute plantation and rice fields - in other words a field laborer). He had not studied but we had a chance to share God's love with him. Normally no one would stop to help him. We took him to his village and were able to share the gospel with him. When we left he had tears on his cheeks, "No one else came to help me" he said. With the love of Jesus we can do it. Even going as far as loving our enemies.

There was a neighbor of mind who despised Jesus. He knew I was sharing Christ everywhere so (excuse me) he would come into my yard early in the morning and defecate in front of my door. For the first three days I kept asking my kids who was doing it and they wouldn't say. Finally on the third day I was up early and caught him in the act so I knew who it was. He was a troublemaker in the neighborhood. I asked God what I should do. God told me. If I called in the authorities it would only become a major issue and we would still have problems living near each other. God told me, "My child, it's not that hard. Go buy a kilogram worth of fish and present it to him." So I got a nice big delicious snakehead fish and gave it to him. After that there was no more poop on my doorstep.

When we're in Jesus we look for ways to show love. Normally when we are dealing with our enemies we want to seek justice. We want to call in the authorities and protect our rights. We want penalties to be paid. We want to call in the law. Well, I used the law - the law of Jesus Christ, the law of love. If we call in the police we'll never see the end of it. Let Jesus provide us with his solutions to our problems. God wants to resolve our issues and provide for our needs if we will just let him.

I had been working in church planting in Udon for seven years when a Chinese believer came up to me and asked, "Teacher, do you have any land here in Udon?" I told him I did not. He offered to sell me a plot for 30,000 baht. I told him I didn't have that kind of money. "How about for 5,000 baht?" Well, even 5,000 was more than I had. I was just a poor evangelist. "Well, how about this. Can you pay on installments of 50 baht per month?" God gave it to me! Later on, after I had paid 2,500 baht the Chinese man was going to move to America with his children. "That's enough" he said. He signed over the title to me and that is where I have lived ever since.

I believe that God will lead us when we follow him. Usually when we think of serving God we worry about what we won't have. Before I had kids I was worried about where the money would come from to raise them. God has provided for those needs. Believe in what he wants to do in us. I thank God for what he has done for me and pray that God would be exalted in my life every day.

Endnotes

¹ The Church of the Grace of God is the Thai name for the Thailand Covenant Church.

² Isaan is the language spoken in northeast Thailand and is distinct from the central Thai language. It is closely related to the Lao language. The region of northeast Thailand and its people are also referred to by the same name, Isaan.

³ Lom is the traditional Isaan form of singing ballads. A singer of lom songs is known as a Maw Lom.

⁴ The Kaen is a bamboo reed wind instrument which is essential to all good Isaan musical occasions.

⁵ Amongst themselves the Isaan usually refer to themselves as Lao and their language as Lao.

⁶ Previously he had worn only flip-flops or run barefoot.

⁷ The ching is a Thai instrument composed of two small brass cymbals on a string. It is used to keep rhythm. It makes a sound of "ching-chop, ching-chop".

⁸ ?????????????? ?????????????? ??????????

⁹ Nakorn Sawaan province is located in the upper part of central Thailand.

¹⁰ Farang is the Thai word for white foreigner.

¹¹ Satoo is the Bali word used at the end of Buddhist prayers to mean, "So Be It".

¹² Thai Rhat is one of the foremost selling newspapers in Thailand specializing on sensationalized news.

¹³ Ning and Nong are an Isaan comedy team who travel and do shows throughout Thailand. These two men could be considered the Thai equivalent of Laurel and Hardy and are very popular.

¹⁴ ????????????

¹⁵ Thailand does have a helmet law however it is not consistently enforced.

¹⁶ ????? ??? The jute plantation and the rice fields, in other words a common laborer.