

Lord God, it has now been two years since the Great East Japan Disasters that occurred on March 11th, 2011 at 2:46 pm. We feel as if our chests are being constricted. As of now, the number of lives lost in the Great East Japan Disasters is 15,880. And the search for the 2,698 missing is still ongoing. This number, O God, represents precious lives that you love, and there are family and friends for each and every one of those lives. The earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant accident damaged or took many lives, as well as destroying houses and livelihoods, and the situation remains unchanged. The pain was experienced not only in the coastal areas of the Tōhoku region, but throughout the entire country. I too experienced that pain.

Fading awareness of the disasters is being decried. However, as we who live in the Tōhoku area listen to each others' pain from the disasters, we feel as if we are being victimized all over again. And there are people being victimized even now as a result of the nuclear power plant accident. Although buildings, houses, seaside processing plants, and greenhouses are being rebuilt, and though the agricultural land has been desalinated, the reality is that restoration is being blocked by radiation. Life in temporary housing, in rebuilt houses, and in strange places after being forced to abandon homes is filled with feelings of grief, powerlessness, self-condemnation and anxiety about the future that never seem to fade. As we seek to grasp restoration, we harbor a fear that the word "restoration" will put an end to the matter, that we will be left behind, that we will be forgotten. As being "useful" for the restoration is of the highest priority, when someone is deemed "useless," their lives are held in contempt, fingers are pointed at them, and sometimes they cannot find value in their own lives. Have mercy on us, though we be insignificant, so that we may stand firm in the hope of the Lord of the cross and the resurrection.

Even in the midst of the pain of the disasters, we once again express our heartfelt thanks for the companionship and grace of the Lord Jesus that we have experienced. You provided us with rich encounters, allowing victims and non-victims alike to exchange words, and to accept each other, creating a fellowship of true caring for one another. I cannot but feel the intercession of the Lord Jesus, especially when I consider that the victims accepted us when we came in as volunteers. Without You going before us, we would have been nothing to them. Furthermore, You granted us encounters with people from all over Japan and the world. I pray from the heart that You will continue to bless all of these relationships so that we can fulfill the work of connecting this place with the world.

Lord, through the disasters we were given encounters with things and people that we had been unable to see, or that we had avoided looking at. We were rendered speechless as we faced various pains that had in fact been laid out before us in the world even before the disasters. May our humble jars of clay be put to use for the pain of the world that became known through disaster areas.

Our foundations, as the Church and as people of faith, were called into question by the disasters. What are the gospel, the Church, and ministry, what is the Lord saying to us, and what we have said? We are now presented with the time to face these questions. However, we have been shown humanity's folly and sin through this nuclear power plant accident, and though we hope to never experience such a thing again – and indeed we *must* not – after merely two years those hopes are being trampled. Establish us as a Church of the Lord Jesus that seeks the reign of God and His righteousness, and that takes action. Establish us in this place as Your congregation, which is the body of Christ. O Lord, have mercy on us. Please grant profound peace to those lives that were taken up to Your side, comfort to those who are sad, hope to those who are in despair, laughter to those who weep, the light of life to those who are disheartened, humor to those who try too hard, rich fellowship to those whose connections have been cut off, healing and protection to those lives and various other creations being exposed to radiation, purpose to those who cannot find meaning in their lives, faith to those whose hearts are driven only by the things they can see, love to those who become apathetic in their chaotic daily lives, prayer to those who are frustrated in the midst of a reality that does not go as they expected, and reconciliation to those whose precious ties have been severed due to the disasters.

O Lord, bring about the work of creation in this place. Bring about the work of creation in each life.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.

May your name be glorified on earth as it is in heaven.

I pray this humble prayer in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.