

Weekly Column  
Korean Newspaper



Melvin University  
and Me

### **There was no Christmas**

As December approaches, the Christmas nightmare of last year, just a year ago, seems to be coming back to life. So in December 2022, it was not long after I was in Kenya, so everything was unfamiliar and the school administrative system was not in place.

Around December 20th, students did not come to school because it was winter vacation, and only about two or three office staff members came to work and worked quietly. At that time, the 23rd was Friday and the 24th was Saturday. On weekends, the staff members are not working, so at the end of the day on Friday, I told the staff, "It's Christmas from tomorrow," and the reactions were bleak. So when I asked again, "Do you know Santa Claus?" the answer came back briefly, saying, "We don't know." So I stopped talking because I thought I couldn't talk anymore.

And it was Christmas Eve on the second day, the 24th, and the school Chapel was quiet all day. No one came even in the evening. There was nothing but silence in the school all night. It was a real "quiet night." Like that, I spent the 24th alone, and on the 25th, I waited inwardly, thinking that some would come to give a "Christmas Service." But no one showed up at 10 or 11 a.m. It was Christmas morning, and not a single ant appeared. I phoned the vice-chancellor because I was a bit angry, and he responded he had a seminar which was promised a year ago, so he was far away from other regions, so he came back late on Monday and went to work on Tuesday. "If he told me in advance, I thought to myself that I wouldn't wait." But the game was already over, so I had no choice but to finish the real Blue Christmas and start Monday morning (26th). I couldn't blame the innocent staff very hard, and I said lightly, "I spent

the weekend alone," and they said, "We'll take care of Christmas next year."

I'm not sure if they'll do it right this Christmas, and I'm worried first. Then I thought again over time, thinking about why they do that. First of all, it's hot here all year round, so they've never seen or learned about Christmas in the cold winter, white snow, carol songs, or anything like that. In Korea, the winter is cold, so people enjoy Christmas while taking a vacation, but it's not a vacation here because it's not a cold winter here, and after taking the end-of-semester test around December 20, the new semester begins around January 3-4, so it's like taking a week off after the end-of-semester test rather than a winter vacation.

There is no concept of vacation here because they study three semesters a year and almost all year. In short, December is hot weather with temperatures over 30 degrees centigrade, so it is impossible to picture an image like Christmas in Korea. Actually, the snow in winter also showed them a picture of snow from Korea last winter, and they said, "Oh, this is what snow looks like. We grew up never seeing it." Another thing is that our school is very rural, so it seems that they cannot afford to take care of Christmas, have no reason to call a carol, and don't need to know because it is a desperate place for all residents to survive.

Churches around the school didn't seem to be having a meaningful Christmas either. I don't remember hearing Christmas carols myself. Moreover, even if there are no hymns books, they just attend church with hymn books, and even if there are, it is the style of old Korean church hymns without notes, and also it is Swahili, not English, so of course, Christmas songs cannot be included. It's a place that doesn't care about the meaning of Christmas.

It could be in a city like Nairobi. When I searched Nairobi for Christmas, I found a place that is very big, but when I looked closely, they are churches known as heresy in Korea, and they seem to be doing Christmas in order to promote them because they have a lot of money and a lot of church members. However, Oyugis, where our school is located, is a place where darkness falls like pitch black in the evening, so it is so quiet that it is scary to go out at night.

Anyway, as I passed my Christmas nightmare last year, I thought slightly that "I should spend next Christmas in Korea," but I think I should also be here this year. It would be a real luxury to go to another country for Christmas. It is considered possible in Korea and the United States as well. Anyway, I will talk to the school in December, hoping that it will be a better Christmas than last year.