



Salted Cucumbers

By Akio Matsuoka

A friend of mine was showing me the large number of old cucumbers she was planning to preserve in salt.

“Are old cucumbers all right to eat?” I asked.

“These are quite dried out, but they’ll be great to pickle!” she replied knowledgeably. For my busy friend, having pickled cucumbers to supplement on-the-go meals is convenient and appreciated.

The thought of these dried cucumbers being transformed into something delicious and healthy reminded me of a story I heard about kimchi. Although kimchi has always existed in Korea, some trace its massive popularity as a food staple to the shortages of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895). New varieties of kimchi were developed by pickling bits of vegetables that weren’t appealing as they were or that were on the verge of rotting with lots of spices in order to make them edible and preserve them. I marvel that one of my favorite foods was developed during a time when there wasn’t enough to eat!

This brings to mind a situation in a rural area of North America where rattlesnakes were making an unwanted appearance. The villagers were scared by the sudden increase in the snake population, and some people even began to move away. Other more enterprising citizens began using the rattlesnakes’ leather skins to manufacture bags and belts. It turned out that the diamondback rattlesnake, which had previously been such a pest, ended up contributing greatly to the development of that area’s economy.

And so it often is that in the midst of situations that appear to be defeats, God can use that very thing to bring something better. We are surrounded daily by problems and unwelcome occurrences. However, God always has a plan. No matter how horrible a situation may appear, we have a God who will never fail us. When things don’t go as planned and when dreams are torn, He may very well be preparing something better.

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We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

—*Romans 8:28 NIV*

Hope is the power of being cheerful in circumstances which we know to be desperate.

—*G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936)*

The Promised Land always lies on the other side of a wilderness.

—*Henry Havelock Ellis (1859–1939)*

Akio Matsuoka has been a missionary and volunteer worker for the past 35 years, both in his native Japan and abroad. He lives in Tokyo. Kimchi is a traditional Korean dish, made of chilis and vegetables pickled in brine.