

Week 46 – Saturday May 12th, 2018



On the beach

Most of my adult life has been spent living near to a beach. Even when I was in London, I lived near the Ruislip Lido that had sand brought in to create the seaside of North London. Some beaches have been miles of golden sands, but I prefer beaches that have stones and shells, rock pools and pebbles – where waves crash over, creating rainbows in the spray. I have attempted to photograph waves breaking but never manage to time it just right.

Have you ever seen the amazing sand sculptures that folk do? They create the most amazing structures that the tide washes away. All that work, all that creativity, just for a few hours at the most. Yet that is every day for us: we live in a world that is never still or the same. The patterns in the sky constantly change, the plants grow, move or wither, but never stay exactly the same. The light changes as the day moves on, the tide goes in and out, sweeping the beaches clean or depositing new items to be discovered.

In Godly Play (a way of sharing Bible stories with children), some of the stories are enacted on sand and when you talk about Abraham's descendents being as numerous as the sand on the seashore, well I can tell you there are a lot of grains even in a handful. Yet all the grains come together to make the beach where we can leave our footprints for just a short while – and yes, I do know that there are good beaches for sandcastles and many others that you cannot build on or leave footprints in because the sand is as different as we are. Some beaches are smooth, some coarse, some painful to walk on, others too soft. Yet when we are at a beach, on the edge of water, the combination is almost irresistible and it is rare that I ever leave a beach without a shell in my pocket to take home as a reminder.

When problems overwhelm us or we feel like we are stuck in sinking sands, then I wonder if you remember a hymn that we used to sing:

***In loving-kindness Jesus came my soul in mercy to reclaim,
and from the depths of sin and shame through grace He lifted me.
From sinking sand He lifted me, with tender hand He lifted me,
from shades of night to plains of light, O praise His name, He lifted me!***

***He called me long before I heard, before my sinful heart was stirred,
but when I took Him at His word, forgiven, He lifted me.
From sinking sand He lifted me, with tender hand He lifted me,
from shades of night to plains of light, O praise His name, He lifted me!***

***His brow was pierced with many a thorn, His hands by cruel nails were torn,
when from my guilt and grief, forlorn, in love He lifted me.
From sinking sand He lifted me, with tender hand He lifted me,
from shades of night to plains of light, O praise His name, He lifted me!***

Amen.