



YOUR INSIGHT

MAY 2014

SHIFTING SANDS

BY JOY BILLSBOROUGH

I'm writing this on Saturday 3rd May at 7 am, up early (for me) with my cup of tea in hand. Today we do the final pack up of City Church "stuff" before our move to PNE and onwards.

It's a time of massive change for the CCP community, so many memories for all of us of special times spent in the building at North Road, for me it's been a major part of my life, since the age of 13 I have worshipped, been baptised, married, had fun, celebrated special occasions, cleaned, worked, sorrowed, wept, laughed, drunk tea and coffee, prayed, counselled, sung and recorded. heard brilliant expositions of God's word, prophesies, messages, made tea, shared with friends, said goodbye to old friends and young friends, some to heaven and some to new countries and towns, welcomed many, many new people and seen some just walk away from their faith, in general I have done life there.

Now, there is this amazing feeling of anticipation, excitement and expectancy that God is about to move us to a different level in our church family, times are changing and we must change too, if we don't I think we die inside a little. Our church family is an amazing place to be right now, to see new members and old members working together over



the last few weeks has been a delight, all pulling in the same direction, with a common goal, truly beautiful, life in action.

Now as you probably know Phil and I were very privileged to spend some time in New Zealand at the beginning of this year, it was a time where I felt so blessed to be able to do the journey and to drink in all the wonder and splendour of God's creation, it's a very beautiful country and definitely worth the arduous journey to be able to see it. Whilst we were staying in Hokitika on the South Island I really felt God speak to me one morning and I put my thoughts onto my iPad straight away and knew that one day I would share it with my dear friends, City Church Women, so here goes, this is more or less what I wrote that morning: -

"Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, when I said, 'This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt'?" (Job 38:8-11 NIV)

and the same verse again from the New English Version:-

When the ocean was born I set its boundaries and wrapped it in blankets of thickest fog. Then I built a wall around it, locked the gates and said, you powerful waves stop here. They can go no further.



I'm sat in an hotel In Hokitika listening to the sound of the mighty ocean as it breaks on the shore, and wondering at the marvel of God's creation, this far and no further! The fierce, raw power of the ocean that brings trees down from the rivers and deposits them on the shore, the creativity at the heart of man as he drags and shapes them into sculptures, so many of which are formed into 'tents' or dwellings, or likenesses of animals.

Then there are the tiniest of stones that have been thrown around the deep, shaped and moulded by the way they rub alongside other stones and pebbles, the hard edges being knocked off in the sea of life, polished to perfection.

The beauty of stones that are full of minerals and how they reflect the sun, sparkling and shining through the dullness that would otherwise be their lot in life, their life cycle of knocks and bumps just adding to their beauty.

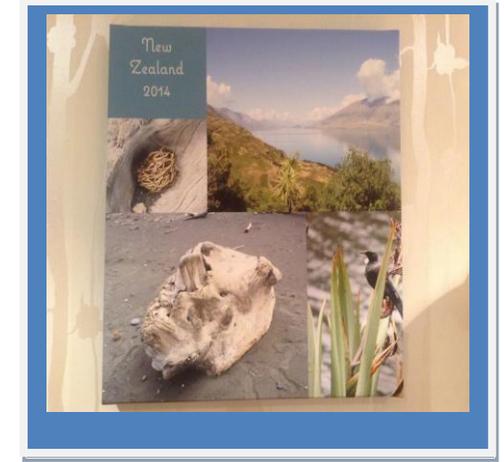
The grains of sand, more than we can count, tiny, tiny pieces, on their own of little worth but together making a carpet of gold, supporting the stones, the pebbles, the rocks and the sea, each of great worth, each in its rightful place, but always flexible, moving along with other grains, being shaped by a greater power.

As I reflected on the sand, pebbles, stones and the beautiful driftwood it was like a reflection of the make-up of a church, the ocean is life and we are the varied pieces that you find on the shore. Every grain of sand, every pebble and stone, every piece of driftwood has been shaped, carved and etched by its experience in that ocean. There have been storms that have washed pieces right up the beach, knocking off rough edges, smoothing out, even polishing, there too have been the gentle daily coming and goings of the tides twice a day, in and out, in and out, each piece being formed by the ocean and the varied weather.

Some pieces of driftwood were amazing and the photo of this piece was at Phil's request, he would have loved to have brought it home but our suitcase would have been inadequate, assuming we could have lifted it! This new canvas (second photograph) is the best I could do for him.

There are pebbles that are particularly beautiful, the longer thy have been in the ocean, the more polished they become. This photo (third photograph) shows a really stunning piece of rock with shining minerals in it, edges worn smooth and inner beauty sparkling through, it's alongside a piece of shell that made it home in my suitcase as well – so what of the shells ? There weren't many on this particular beach that were obvious, but there was evidence that they had been there, now just broken fragments, finished, having carried life and done their work, completely spent and yet still beautiful.

My passion when I am on a beach is looking for driftwood, so Hokitika was paradise for me, I could have stayed a week there and not grown tired of looking for special pieces, unfortunately getting them all back home was the restraining factor - but what really spoke to me was the sand, usually just something that you don't think a lot about, but without the sand there is no beach, it is the supporting structure for all that lies on top of it, but it's not fixed, it moves around with the ebb and flow of the tide.



*If you don't feel very significant,
hear what God's Word says about
you...*

◆ *You're Beautiful - Ps.45:11*

*So will the King desire your
beauty; because He is your Lord, be
submissive and reverence and
honor Him.*

◆ *You're Unique - Ps.139:13*

*For You did form my inward parts;
You did knit me together in my
mother's womb.*

◆ *You're Loved - Jer.31:3*

*I have loved you with an
everlasting love; I have drawn you
with unfailing kindness.*

◆ *You're Special - Ep.2:10*

*For we are God's handiwork, created
in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for
us to do.*

◆ *You're Important - 1Pet.2:9*

*But you are a chosen people, a royal
priesthood, a holy nation, God's
special possession, that you may
declare the praises of him who
called you out of darkness into his
wonderful light.*

*Be blessed in the knowledge that
YOU are loved beyond measure...*

So which piece are you? Are you the stunning piece of sculpted driftwood, right up at the front, with a message loud and clear for all to see? Or is it that you feel broken and at the end of your life's work like a piece of shell, having given everything? Or could it be that you know your beauty is shining through even though you've been around a while, yet you know that life has polished off those rough edges allowing the sparkle to shine through? Or do you see yourself as an insignificant grain of sand?

Whichever piece you see yourself as in the church of Jesus Christ, you are of great value, the grains of sand are countless, small, so small and yet without them there is no beach, if you think you are less than the least, then there is a message here for you, without YOU there is no church, each grain is known to God and each member is known to him, the large, sculpted pieces of driftwood are few and far between, there are more of us that feel ordinary and common than there are large pieces. But those grains of sand support everything else that lies on top.

However we see ourselves we have a part to play and as we move with the tide of God's Holy Spirit into our new home for City Church Preston, let's be flexible, useful, doing that which God has called us to do.

Shifting sand?! Yes moving with the tide, being flexible, supporting, sparkling, shining in the light of the Son of God, attractive to those who have an eye to see.

I love the church of which I am a part and I love the messages we can see all around us in God's awesome creation. I love doing life with you, City Church Women and being privileged to gaze on the glory I see on the shore of our church, lives being transformed, changing, progressing, growing more beautiful with every ebb and flow of God's tide of love.

Keep shining for Him!

With love,

Joy x



*How precious to me are your
thoughts, O God! How vast is the
sum of them,
Were I to count them, they
would outnumber the grains of
sand.*

Psalm 139: 17-18

If you would like to share your story or something that God has been speaking to you about, you can send it to Meliza: melizahere@yahoo.co.uk. We would love to hear from you! x



City Church Women
Leaving heart prints on our world