



LIFE'S A BEACH

Rex Morgan
8 August 2015

Most of us in Auckland live near a beach. This is one of the great things about living here. I live just a 5-minute walk from Takapuna Beach, and try to get down there for a walk along the beach almost every day.

There are some things we can learn about life and God from the beach, so I'd like to talk about those in the sermon today.

Here's an interesting scripture:

[Isa.42:10](#) "Sing to the Lord a new song, His praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them."

Looking at the sea is a fantastic experience – like looking at the stars above. The magnitude of the sea is beyond description. It goes for miles and miles – as far as the eye can see, and well beyond that. Its length and depth and width are beyond measurement. When we stroll along the beach, the sea impresses us with its power and majesty, and makes us feel humble as a speck of humanity on the edge of a great ocean that spreads around the globe.

Does that remind you of God?

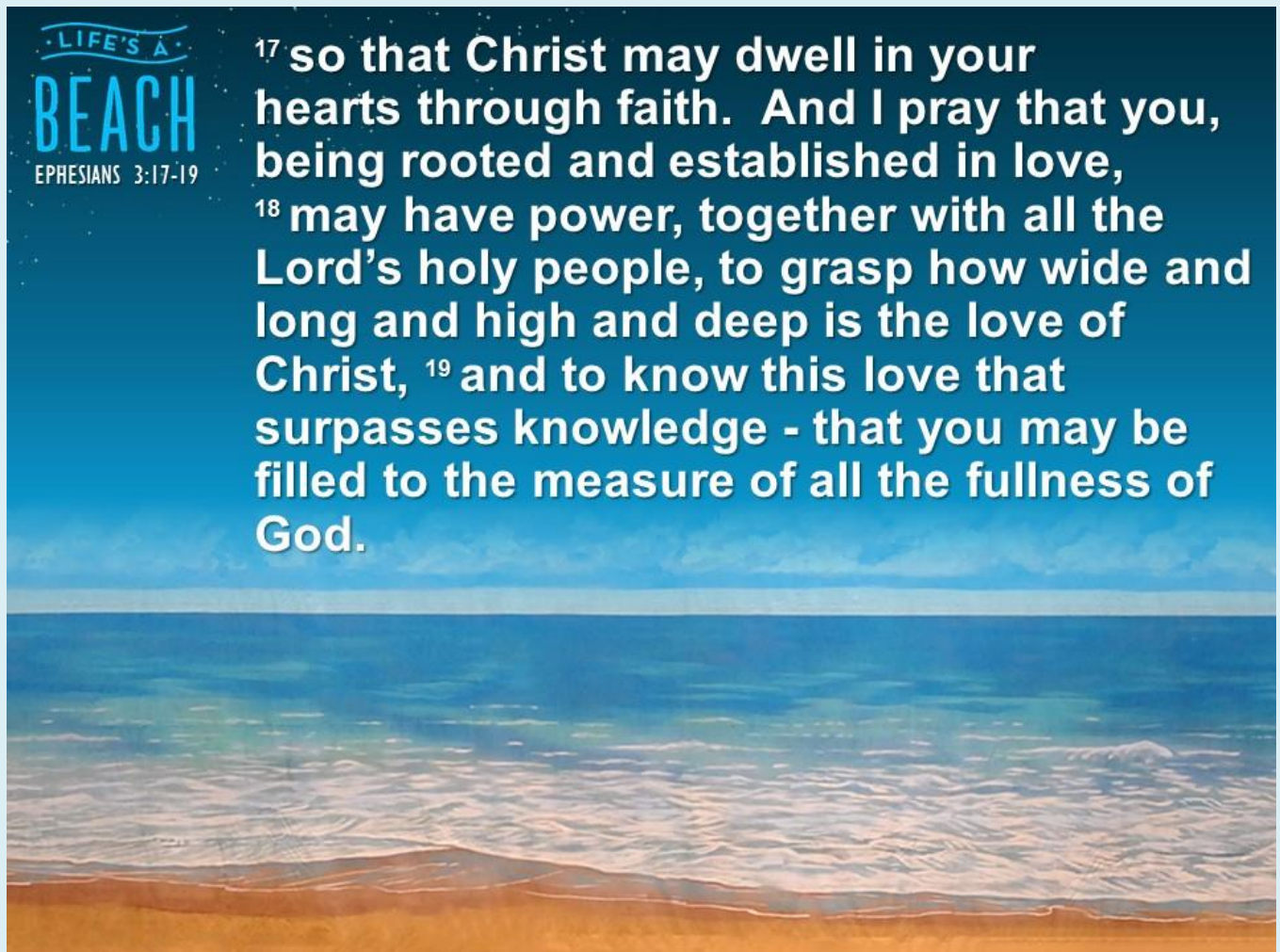
We can never, at least while we're humans, fully comprehend His greatness. He is awesome and glorious – His glory fills the earth and we are so frail and useless in comparison!

This is true of the sea as well as the sky.

[Psalm 19:1-4](#) ¹"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. ²Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. ³They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. ⁴Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun."

God's love is like this.

[Eph.3:17-19](#) ¹⁷"so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."



It's as if we are walking along the beach of life, and sometimes the love of God sweeps in and gives us blessings as it covers us like a big high tide coming and washing over the sand.

We can't do anything – we are like the sand, but God's love rushes over us, as the Holy Spirit fills our lives. And of course the Holy Spirit is compared to water in the Scriptures – rivers of living water.

We are washed by the water of the Holy Spirit, and the Word.

[Eph.5:26](#) "to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word,"

If this is what water can do, what can be done by the sea? The Bible answers that:

[Micah 7:19](#) “You will again have compassion on us; You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.”

Our sins are covered – drowned in the depths of the sea!

It’s interesting that when we repent we are immersed in water for baptism (often people are baptised in the sea) – the water washes away our sins.

So the waves of the sea are like the blood of Jesus, washing over us, cleaning out all our impurities. As the breakers crash in, one after the other, continuously, we can think of the body of Jesus Christ being broken time and again to cover our sins. It only happened once, of course, but every time we sin, we need to rely on that sacrifice, so in a way it is always occurring – it is of infinite value and always applies.

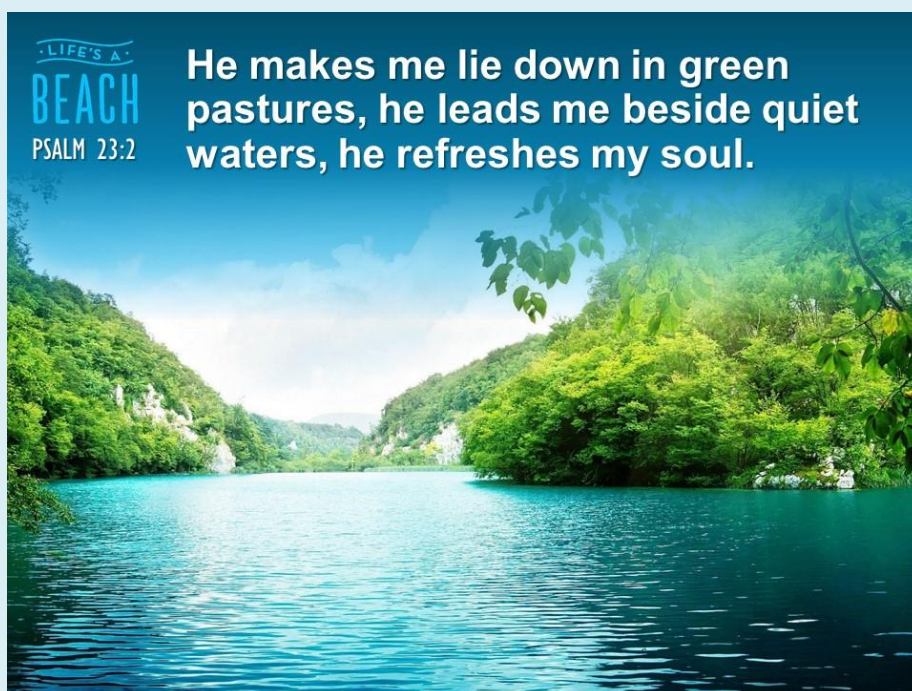
Every time we sin we are calling on that sacrifice again, and that is serious, not something to be taken for granted or flippantly in any way. So we are told in [1 Cor.11:29](#) to discern His body (considering it carefully.)

“For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.”

The salty water of the sea is quite a healer. Cuts, wounds, and sores are sterilised, cleansed and able to heal speedily if bathed in the sea. Salt stops bacteria from replicating, and works as an abrasive to cleanse the wound. Salt water has antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties. And seaweed is full of nourishing minerals too.

There is something therapeutic about the ocean. If you aren’t feeling well, it’s a great place to go – a few hours (or days) by the sea will help put you right! It’s a lovely place to be, with the fresh and pungent sea air on your face, and dipping your feet in the tide. Everyone enjoys the beach!

[Psalm 23:2-3](#) ²“He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, ³He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for His name’s sake.” This famous verse talks about still, quiet waters – they refresh the soul, and so do the pounding waters of the surf on a beautiful beach.



Here's what a winter in England (Harry Sullivan) said (referring to [John 7:38-39](#)³⁸) "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."³⁹ By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."

"One of the great pleasures in my life is walking in the countryside. Frequently, my walks take me beside a brook which flows on the edge of our property. It always has water in it and it's always moving, it's never stagnant. The volume of water varies with the seasons of the year. In the summer there is not a lot of water in it, but in winter it is full, close to overflowing.

Other changes occur. Grass, reeds and other vegetation grow on the banks and on parts of the bed. Nettles and briars flourish in some sections. Sometimes silt builds up. Parts of the bank can collapse. Trees whose roots take its water sometimes shed boughs into it, forming a barrier which collects smaller branches and leaves, impeding the flow. Litter dropped by people – cans, plastic bottles and bags – build up. Debris appears. Large stones hamper the flow. The brook still functions but less effectively as it makes its way around the obstacles, and the flow never stops but it is sluggish.

This process continued over time, for months and years. Then one day I noticed an unusual sight in the distance – a mechanical digger slowly and carefully working its way along one bank, scooping out all the rubbish, stripping away vegetation, smoothing the sides, straightening silted-up parts. After the digger had passed, the brook flowed much faster and was now capable of dealing with a larger volume of water.

We are all familiar with the analogy of water and the Holy Spirit. The Bible uses the expression "filled with the Holy Spirit" when God is using someone to say or do something special, often something he or she may never have done before. It's worth asking ourselves if we ever allow "debris" in our own lives to impede the "flow" of the Spirit?

We live in a time of increasing pressure and distractions from many directions. The "cares of this life" can and do intrude. It's easy to get priorities mixed up. I am not implying that we are actively resisting the Holy Spirit but sometimes we put other things first which stop us yielding ourselves to His guidance. What sort of "channel" do we provide for the work of the Holy Spirit? The clearer it is, the more God can use us."

Any idol we have, any sin in our life, is a structure that can hold back the impact of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

We need to "walk by the Spirit", not referring to a physical walk, but a spiritual walk.

[Gal 5:16](#) "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."

[2 Co.5:7](#) "For we live by faith, not by sight."

A walk along the beach on a blustery day can remind us of this. The sea breeze or wind is full of oxygen and very bracing, reminding us of the Holy Spirit which, as Jesus said, blows like the wind, and it can be a powerful wind, as in Acts 2.

When the wind is really strong, one of the things you see at Takapuna Beach is the kite surfers that suddenly appear, riding the waves and the wind at incredible speed! They depend on the wind to keep them aloft and moving fast – just as we do on the Holy Spirit.

It reminds me of 2 Corinthians 5:7, "We walk by faith, not by sight." How can they know where they're going? If I was one of them, I'd be doing it by faith!

Surfers ride on the waves of the sea like we should do on the waves of the Holy Spirit, when we really are in tune with God and walking by the Spirit.

An amazing thing about the beach is that going there to enjoy its wonders is entirely free of charge! It is free to use as much of it as we wish. Just like God's Holy Spirit is free for our taking – as much as we desire.

One lovely thing about a walk on the beach is that from time to time we come upon a surprise – a beautiful shell or trove of shells.

Life is like that – here and there scattered through our lives are some beautiful bonuses, special surprises and gifts God gives us. It's good to look for these – they aren't always obvious. Sometimes they are hidden in the sand. But the blessings are there, if we are watching for them, precious gifts from God.

If we have the approach of living with an attitude of gratitude, counting our blessings, we will be rewarded.

Thankful in all circumstances.

[1 Thess. 5:18](#) “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

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I THESSALONIANS 5:18



**Give thanks in all
circumstances; for this is God's
will for you in Christ Jesus.**



Another thing we find on the beach is beautiful, small, smooth stones, shining in the sand.

These have come from huge boulders, which have tumbled and shattered in the ocean over hundreds of years and stormy seasons, gradually being smoothed by the relentless tide. That reminds us of the way our character is gradually smoothed, with the rough edges knocked off us by the washing of the Holy Spirit through trials and challenges.

One of Mr. Tkach's ["Speaking of Life" programs made reference to this – "Glass Beach":](#)

"Beaches are some of the most beautiful places in God's creation. But there's one in northern California that didn't start that way. It's called Glass Beach, and it got its name because the local town didn't have a garbage removal service. So they threw their trash over the cliffs. Empty bottles, shattered windows, even cars ended up there. Eventually, the city was forced to shut down the beach.

That's when something really interesting happened. As the years passed, the waves ground all that broken glass into smooth pebbles. Finally, the garbage-filled beach was transformed into a beautiful kaleidoscope of colour.

This whole process reminded me of our sanctification – the way in which we as Christ-followers are moulded and shaped through the power of the Holy Spirit to become more and more like our Saviour. The book of Titus puts it this way:

"He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:5-7, ESV)

We know that the grace of Jesus has already justified us in the eyes of God. But as fallen human beings, it's impossible for us to fully live out the perfect character of Christ each day. This is where the Holy Spirit comes in. It's only through His activity in our hearts and minds that we can truly be changed, sharing more and more in our full humanity regenerated and raised up in Christ and given to us by His Spirit.

Like the waves crashing year after year on Glass Beach, the Holy Spirit works to remove our rough edges, using events and circumstances in our life for the refinement of our character, gently and persistently re-shaping us into the image of Christ. So that just like Glass Beach, what might start out looking like garbage can be refined into a truly beautiful kaleidoscope reflecting the very light and life of Jesus Christ."



(pictures from Google Images)

The washing of the Holy Spirit will smooth our spirit and shape our character and polish us up so we are precious gems in God's sight!

[Zech.9:16](#) "The Lord their God will save His people on that day as a shepherd saves his flock. They will sparkle in His land like jewels in a crown."

Another example of the smoothing caused by the constant action of the sea is driftwood – the sea sculpts and crafts it into smooth and fascinating shapes.

Now, a bit of a surprise. You probably didn't realise that the North Shore is mentioned in the Bible. Did you know that? I can prove it. What's more, Jesus was there!

[John 21:4](#) "Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the Shore."

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JOHN 21:4

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.



That was the occasion after the resurrection, when Jesus showed the disciples how to get more fish by throwing their net on the right side of the boat. They got a huge haul, and then found Jesus had cooked them breakfast on the beach!

[John 21:8-9](#) ⁸"The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread."

The beach is a good place to pray.

[Acts 21:5](#) “When it was time to leave, we left and continued on our way. All of them, including wives and children, accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray.”

And it would be a good place for services!

[Luke 5:3](#) “He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then He sat down and taught the people from the boat.”

I mentioned how the vastness of the sea pictures the immensity and awesomeness of God. Another thing that is vast is the sand. How many grains of sand are there on a beach?

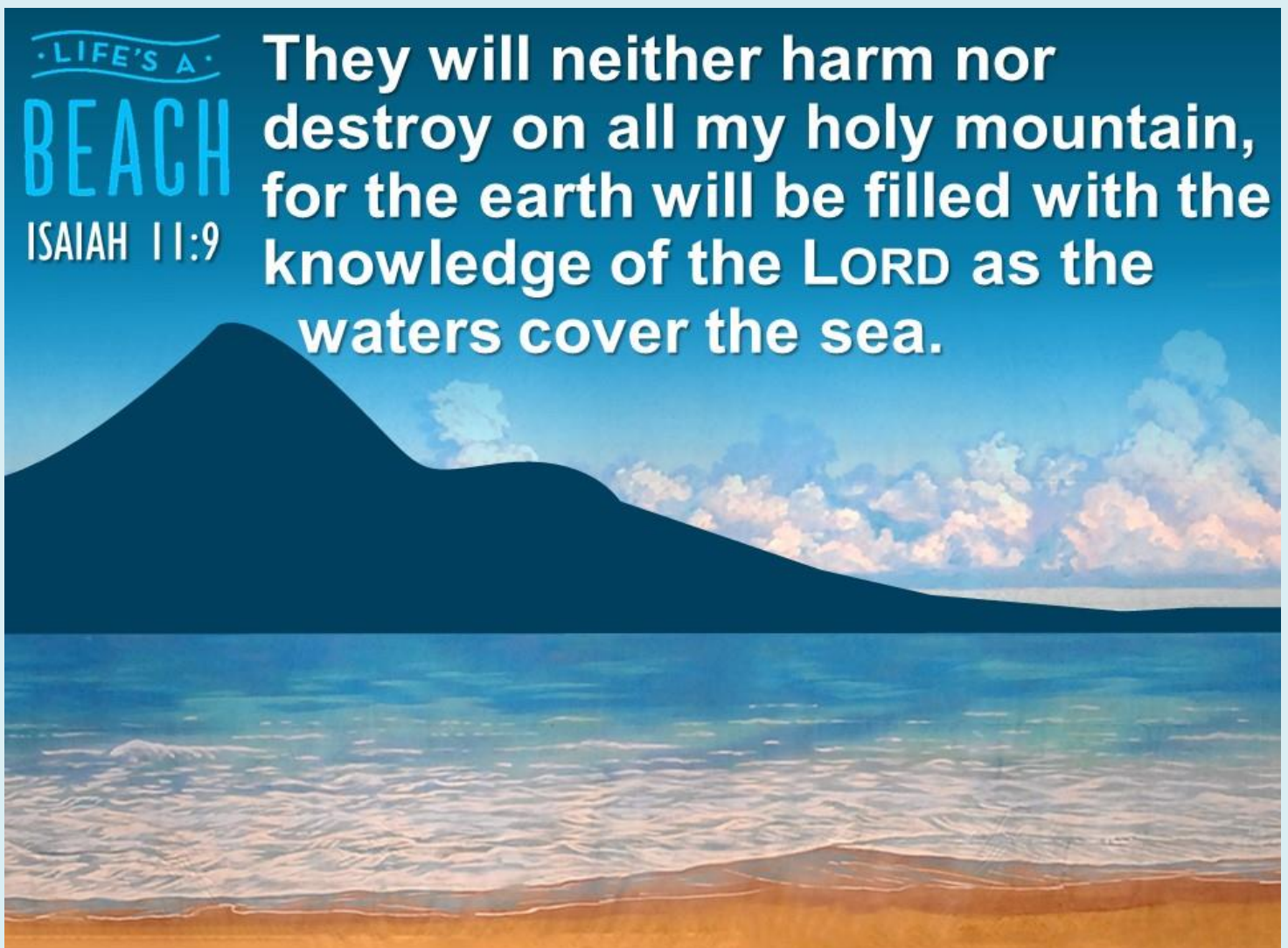
That reminds me of passages like [Gen.22:17](#) “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.”

God promised to make Abraham’s descendants that many! And that is talking about us, because we are all Abraham’s children, spiritually, as he is the father of the faithful.

[Gal 3:29](#) “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

So looking at all those grains of sand gives us an idea of how many faithful people will be in the Kingdom of God! And here’s a verse that tells us something else about the Kingdom of God.

[Isa.11:9](#) “They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

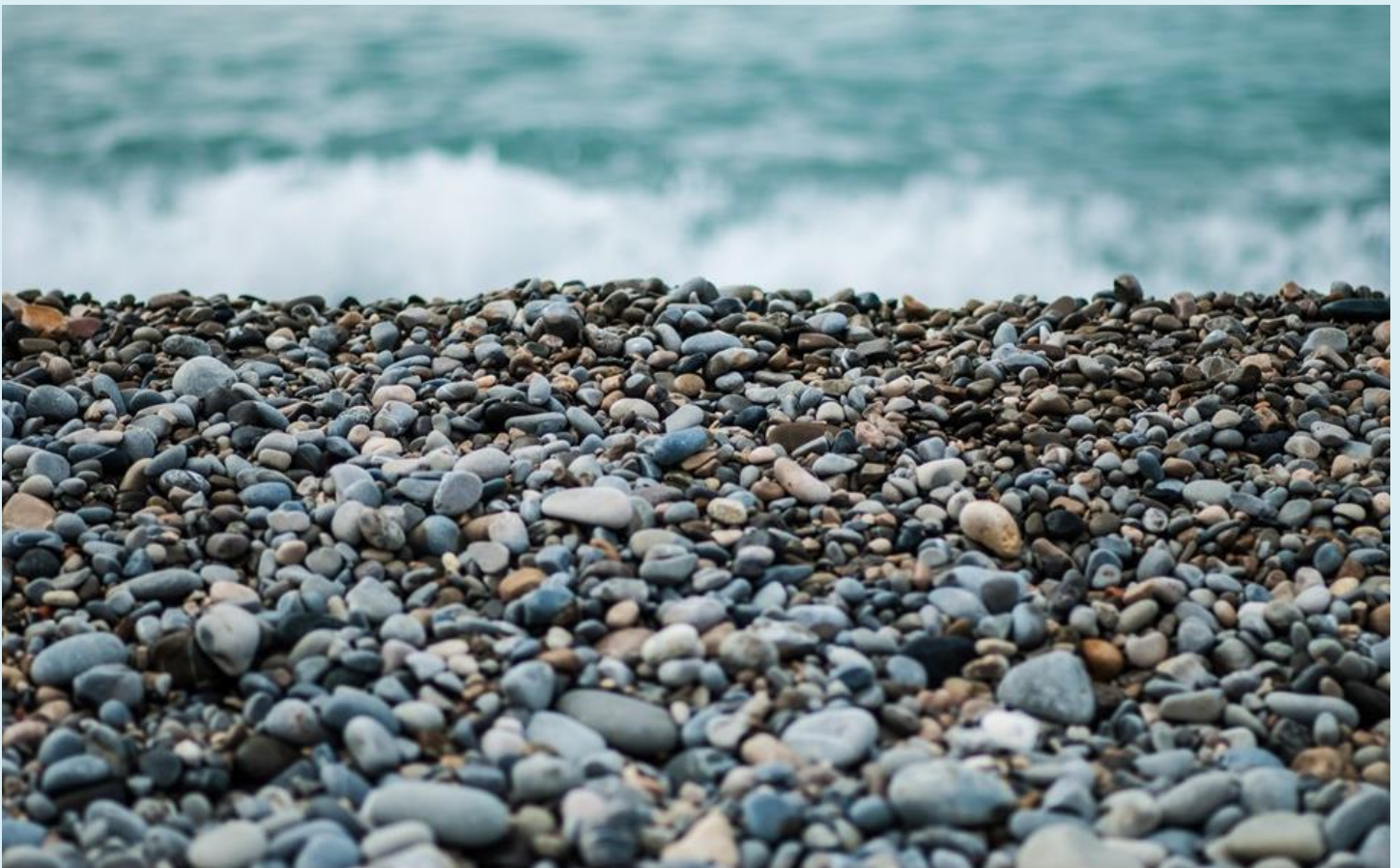


With that much knowledge of God, and that many faithful people, the Kingdom of God is going to be a wonderful place!

So we can learn a lot about God from taking a walk along the beach and thinking about the sea. The vastness of the ocean reminds us of God's endless love. That's where our sins are drowned – in the love of God.

Just as the sea brings the shells, and the waves mould the rocks into smooth stones and eventually into sand, so the love of God washes and cleans and shapes us into the people of God, who will cover the earth like sand in the Kingdom of God, when the love of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

So as we are constantly washed by the relentless waves of the love of God, we are like the sand being immersed in His love, so we can say in a way, spiritually, that "life is a beach"!



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- *Rex Morgan*