

The tides of life

One of my favourite places to walk is along a section of the coast on the Fleurieu Peninsula, in South Australia. The walk starts at Petrol Cove, a rocky little beach with strong currents, where more than one swimmer has lost their life, and heads southwards out along the cliff edges towards the furthest visible point called Kings Head.

Some days when we walk it is sunny and still, and the waves come rolling in to the land in a line. Further out on the calm waters, you can see the little fishing boats moving across the water heading out for the day. At other times, the wind whips around you, nearly blowing you away. If you are wearing a hat you must clutch onto it tightly or abandon wearing it; and the sea churns and crashes against the rocks below sending up showers of white spray.

Part way along the walk the path drops down onto Deps beach. When the tide is out you can walk along the sand, but if it is in, you are forced to walk along a narrow path through spinifex grass above the high water mark. Most times we are lucky and walk along the beach. I like this beach as, at each end towards the water's edge, there are rocky shelves and rock pools where you can watch the waves spilling into the pools, then withdrawing and leaving a pool of perfect calm.

When we first started going to this beach it was mainly sand, with the odd craggy rock protruding through. Then one visit, to our surprise, the beach was totally changed. There had been stormy weather and instead of long stretches of sand, there were only small patches and lots of jagged rock. As we worked our way over the now rocky beach I noticed that some of the rock, which I had first thought ugly, had beauty with striations of colour and unusual shapes. Over time more gentle tides have come and gone bringing back some of the sand; so that the steepness and sharp edges of the rocks are hidden, and the beach has a softer, more inviting look.

We can be like that beach. There are peaceful times when our lives are like the sandy beach. We feel happy and fulfilled. Life is good and we find it easy to give freely to others and be the person we would like to be. We cannot imagine it any other way.

Then the tide turns, the winds blow and the waves of trouble surge through our lives. Harsh jagged parts of us, which we have been unaware of, are exposed. We struggle to like ourselves and feel that we have little to offer others. We wonder whether our lives will ever be the same again. Yet, those who love us still see beauty, just as I saw beauty in the colour and shapes of the ragged rocks on the beach.

If we are patient, and wait for the Lord to heal, the gentler tides of life will return. The sands will come and cover the harsh rocks in our lives. We will once more be at peace with ourselves and able to bring joy and blessing to others.

Psalms 71:20,21 (NIV) says, "Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up, You will increase my honour and comfort me again."

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