

BEACH MUSINGS ON GOD

*“If there’s **heaven** for me, I’m sure it has a beach attached to it.”*

Jimmy Buffet

*“In one drop of water are found all the **secrets** of all the oceans.”*

Kahlil Gibrah

I’ve been trying to take a walk on the beach every morning.

It is the first thing on my agenda each morning.

But this morning was different.

I had a conversation with the God of the universe this morning.

In my previous shoreline outings (since we’ve arrived at our snow birding location here in North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina), I’ve done all the talking: a worshipful thank-you for God’s wondrous works, appreciation for the gift of life for another day, a long list of prayer requests on behalf of my many needy relatives, friends, and acquaintances.

Then—after what I deem to be a respectful period—I walk or jog back to the resort.

All with the best of intentions.

So, this morning I walked southward toward the Maritime Beach Club, stopping between two posts that mark my favorite morning prayer place. I looked out over the endless waves, listened to the pounding surf and cawing birds, tasted the salty air, and let my nostrils take in the unique ocean smells.

On my way, I had passed a handful of people—an elderly couple sitting in their beach chairs (he had two fishing poles in the water, wore a Vietnam veteran’s hat and said they were from the western part of the state; she smiled, clutched her book, and told me she had recently retired from teaching). The couple had been there yesterday morning as well.

I had the distinct feeling that he really didn’t care whether he caught any fish or not. They were enjoying the beach and being together.

Others walked by as I stood there: a squabbling couple, two ladies keeping each other company, and another couple (she thanked me for my service). That is one thing nice about the South; at least once a day (if I’m wearing my Vietnam air force-era cap), someone will say “thank you for your service.” I could wear the same cap for months in the Washington D.C. area and no one would say anything.

Just saying.

But back to this morning at the beach. As the waves continued to roll in and retreat—leaving tumbling pieces of shells and foamy globs in their wake—I began to thank God for the consistency and beauty of His creation. My mind tried to fathom the eons it must have taken just to come up with the idea of sand: nature’s perfect buffer, porous absorber, scrubber-cleanser, and cooler.

But then, that is my human mind trying to wrap itself around the miracle of creation.

I recalled that my very first church sermon was on the topic of sand.

I still think of it from time-to-time.

As I stood there this morning, I began to visualize the constantly moving ocean waves as the drenching spiritual waters breaking in one fresh wave after another over my heart, soul, and spirit. I asked God to make my heart like the sand at the beach: completely porous and absorptive, able to be repaired, restored, and rejuvenated.

In a word, full of *life*.

A heart full of life-yielding DNA, just like the frittering, frothy remains that so quickly dissipated after one-wave-after-another melted back into the ocean deep.

For some reason, my attention was drawn to several shells and fragmented pieces below my feet. I picked up four shells, the smallest and most delicate survivors of ceaseless interaction between surf and sand. An inner voice whispered to me how God delights in using the small—and seemingly insignificant—things of this world to achieve His purpose and grand design.

I remembered one of my favorite quotes from Peter Jackson’s highly successful *Hobbit* movies. In *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*, Gandalf is talking to Galadriel, who asks the wizard why he put so much faith in Bilbo Baggins, a hobbit. After admitting that Bilbo gave him hope, Gandalf ends by saying: “I found it is the small everyday deeds of ordinary people that keep the darkness at bay.”¹

At any rate, as I headed toward the resort, I began the short walk along a blue-plastic walkway that separates the beachside dunes. I have returned to the resort using the same route every morning. But this morning, on the blue walkway, something remarkable happened.

I know some of you will have a hard time accepting what happened next.

That is okay.

If it was anybody but me, I would probably feel the same.

In my inner spirit, I heard a voice—and that voice was clear.

¹ I had to dig a bit to come up with the quote that made such an impression on me when I watched the movie. See, Tom Steel, “Gandalf’s 10 Most Iconic Quotes From The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit,” *CBR.com*, Sep. 08, 2022.

You see, like so many others, my conversations with God are one-sided. I do all the talking (and pleading). I am always bombarding God with a list of personal needs or prayer requests for others.

I almost never take time to listen.

But the voice was clear. “Yes, I also rejoice in the creation I’ve created for man to enjoy. But what is even more beautiful to Me is a completely yielded human heart. In that kind of heart, I can implant the whole glory and power of My creation.”

Wow!

That was it.

No angels singing, no thunder from heaven.

Just a quiet word.

And an encounter I’ll treasure forever.