



*A Message from Mark!*  
**God Does Not Disappoint**

30 May 2010 - Parade Service  
Scripture: Ps 8 + Romans 5:1-5

By this time tomorrow I'll be on holidays at Curramundi Lakes on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. I don't know about you, but there's something about the beach that fascinates and attracts me. I think that's true for many of us. We only have to look at Australia's consistent pattern of coastal habitation and its holiday popularity.

Sitting on the sand and watching the sea, hearing the ceaseless waves pound on the shore, smelling the salt air...it all somehow puts you into a different kind of state, a mood, a meditative, reflective mood, at least it does for me. And when it does, I almost always see things I'm often too busy to see; hear things my noisy world often covers up or shuts out altogether. The beach has a way of opening us up to the voice and presence of God.

This should be no surprise to us. All of nature has that power. Isn't this what happens to the psalmist one night as he stands and gazes into the starry heavens? His mind immediately goes to God, amazed at his own smallness in the universe, but even more amazed that God knows and cares for him and each person. The starry heavens did for him what the beach does for me. But I admit that I'm a stargazer too. Every time I'm up at our country retreat at Faraday, near Castlemaine, I am amazed at the clarity of vision in the night sky and the infinite number of stars so clearly visible.

*This sermon was preached by Rev Mark J Dunn at  
St John's Uniting Church  
Cnr Mt Alexander Road and Buckley Street Essendon Victoria 3040  
Home/Work Ph: 9375 1065 Mob: 0409 009 443  
Email: mark@dunn.id.au*

*www.stjohnsessenon.org.au  
Enquiries about the Christian faith are always welcome.*

So, how anyone can look at the vast sea, majestic mountains or infinite starlit sky and not have their thoughts go to God is beyond me.

Let me take you this evening on a brief trip to the beach. Let's walk in those ancient sands and let them sing to us; show us God. You may like to close your eyes to enjoy this trip. It's a warm sunny day. You've walked out over the low golden sand dunes. Somewhere in the distance you hear the delightful sound of children playing in the sun. The smell of salt is in the breeze.

Some gulls circle above and squawk their secret messages to each other. Your favourite hat offers the necessary solar protection. You take off your shoes to enjoy the sensation of millions of warm grains of sand surrounding your feet. Heading on down to the shoreline you play with the waves as they try to catch you and baptize you. All your cares and troubles seem a million miles away. You've walked on to where someone has spent hours working the wet sand as an artist. Not your average racing car or fort of sand castles to entertain the kids.

You discover a magnificent work in three panels; scenes in the sand...sculptures done by someone who, at first, you think probably just had too much time on their hands. But as your eyes take in all the detail, you suddenly feel the very presence of God...

At first there is a depiction of Jesus. Strong face, long tangled hair, the hint of an inviting smile. Next there is the Lord's Supper. The twelve reclining around a low bench-like table. A message: **ALL ARE WELCOME** is the prominent caption. And in the third panel, one final masterpiece ... our Lord on the cross taking on the sins of the world.

The creator of these sculptures is obviously more than a skilled artist. His or her canvas is sand – but what is expressed comes from the heart. In that sand at the beach you see God anew. You can only imagine the reactions of others as they see those magnificent creations. As you walk on, you trust and pray that others will be as moved as you were.

You are tennis players who do a lot of serving - and this service which I'm delighted to host serves as a reminder of your identity in Christ. The Apostle Paul reminds us that because we are people of faith, we experience that Divine peace in our lives that we know comes from Christ. Indeed he calls us to boast about that!

Now, we're not usually big on boasting unless perhaps you come back to win from being love/40 down in the final game of the deciding set of the grand final match of the season. Then some healthy boasting and a sigh of relief would be warranted I'd say - but here Paul calls us to boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. You can do that in the way you play your tennis and in the way you live life.

And not only that, but we can also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

This is a wonderful assurance for us with our Tennis and in our life generally and I wish you well in your journey.

**Amen!! Thanks be to God!!**