

Washed Away Forever

Annie

Scriptures:

Matthew 18:21-22

Psalm 103:12

Hebrews 8:12

This was their very own beach, the only way to get there was by the steep path through the manuka and kanuka trees at the end of the clifftop garden. A place that could become a magical kingdom where the sun always shone on the little sandy beach and the sea always sparkled, or a place of ogres and giant sea creatures when the storms whipped up the waves. A place that heard their laughter, watched their games and kept their whispered secrets.

Carrie and Jools had been best friends for as long as they could remember. Then the day came when they had a really awful quarrel. Later, they couldn't even remember how it had started, but it ended with loud voices and cruel words that shocked them both. Slowly, with eyes stinging as the tears flowed, Carrie bent down and wrote in the sand with her finger "my best friend just shouted at me and it hurts so much".

As the shadows lengthened, there was time for one last swim before heading back up the steep path and home for dinner. The tide was coming in and beginning to crash against the rocks with so much force that Carrie got thrown against them. No matter how hard she tried, she wasn't a strong enough swimmer to fight back. Then, a hand grabbed her arm and did not let go until they were both back in the shallows, gasping and sobbing in relief.

Suddenly, Carrie got up, found a broken shell and began to scratch these words on one of the rocks, "my best friend just rescued me and I'm so grateful". Jools looked at her and asked why she had written that on a rock and the other message in the sand. Carrie smiled back at her best friend. "Can you still see the first message?" As Jools shook her head, Carrie continued, "when you hurt me, I wrote it in the sand so that the waters of forgiveness would wash the words and the hurt away forever, never to be seen again; when you rescued me, I wrote it on the rock so I will see it every time we come here and remember how blessed I am."

21 Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" **22** Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven times."

As a child, I loved the stories of Jesus. The lost sheep, the son who found his way home and into the arms of his Daddy, the man set upon by robbers and left for dead. Stories, yes, but stories with meaning and relevance so deep that they have indelibly shaped my life and my way of thinking. This is why there is such wisdom in the way Jesus taught.

He could have spelled out and spoken the principles of God's Kingdom with no illustration, no imagery to connect these principles to the reality of living in a fallen world. And, to most people, they would be just words. Words to be debated and argued over, words to be tucked away and buried in the morass of our busy lives. But the image of seed being smothered by weeds, being

scorched by the sun or being fruitful and thriving, stays with us. The vision of a pearl so beautiful that someone is prepared to give up everything to possess it, is a picture that we cherish.

Jesus taught His disciples and the people who hung on His every word in parables, because He knew beyond doubt that they would be etched in their imagination, available whenever needed in order to remember that "the Kingdom of God is like...."

Prayer: Abba Father, thank You for these precious stories of Jesus, timeless images that remain with us and continue to inspire and keep us grounded in the way to live now in Your Kingdom, in the mighty name of Jesus we give You thanks, Amen

Almost 40 years ago. we used to live on the clifftop above the beach that inspired my attempt at a parable. There was a steep path from the garden through the tea trees, over the rocks and down to the beach. The house we lived in has the white roof and it had the only access to the rocky cove at high tide.

