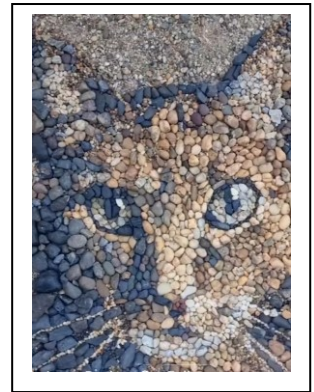


Transformation

Following on from last week, I have chosen to use the same picture again, of the pebbled cat on the beach. I'm sure most of us will have made sandcastles over the years, either as a child or with our children or grandchildren, but I don't suppose many of us have been this creative.

This picture will have taken a long time to create. Made up of hundreds of little stones, all different colours, shapes, and sizes, each one placed strategically in the correct place, resulting in the outcome of an incredible, spectacular, and beautiful image.



What a transformation. Yet, if we think about it, isn't that what God does with each one of us. When we give our lives to him, He takes each part of us, every miniscule fragment of our being, and wants to transform us into something so beautiful it is breathtaking.

There are several accounts in the Bible of God transforming people's lives. Perhaps there is no one who experienced a greater change after an encounter with God, than Saul.

When we first read about Saul in the New Testament, he is a well-respected Pharisee who is totally against Christians and takes delight in seeing Stephen, the first Christian martyr, being stoned to death. From there, Saul went on to try and destroy the early church by dragging Christian women and men from their homes and throwing them into prison (Acts Ch 7).

It was whilst on his way to Damascus, to do more harm to the church, that Saul had an unexpected encounter with Jesus. As Saul was walking along, he suddenly sees all around him a bright light from heaven. It is so bright Saul is dazzled and falls to the ground. He then hears a voice, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

Saul is utterly confused and cries out, "Who are you, sir?"

The person replies, "I'm Jesus, the one you're persecuting. Get up! Go into the city and you'll be told what to do" (Acts 9 v 3-6).

From that moment on, Saul's life changed, and God continued to work in his life. From being one who wanted to destroy the early church, Saul, whose name was changed to Paul, became one of the first leaders to build up the church. He travelled across many countries spreading the love of God and the Good News of Salvation through Jesus Christ. Paul wrote numerous letters which make up much of the New Testament we have today. Paul lived for Jesus, and although suffered for his faith, Paul counted it all gain. There was nothing better in this world than living for Christ Jesus and following him.

There is no doubt that Jesus still transforms lives today.

I was reading recently about a man called David who considered himself as an agnostic (someone who doesn't know if they believe in God or not). Whilst studying at university, he was provoked by the confidence of some Christians he met and argued with them for many months. He became persuaded that there was more evidence about Jesus than he had thought. He wasn't being asked to trust in something flaky, but to trust something that was convincing. David began to think maybe Jesus had lived. Maybe he had risen from the dead. But he wasn't sure.

After several months, David decided to 'give God a go'. In the library, with his Maths books in front of him, he prayed asking Jesus to make himself known to him. Nothing happened. It was 2 weeks later, when David prayed again, making the decision to believe in God. The following day something unusual happened. He had a quiet and undeniable assurance that Jesus was alive and that God's Spirit was in his life. He had never known anything like it before. God had begun to answer his prayer and was beginning to work in his life. The transformation was beginning.

If we are willing to 'give God a go', we too will see God working in our lives, transforming our hearts and minds into being more like Himself. We will get it wrong sometimes, and it doesn't happen overnight. It is ongoing, and a gradual, step by step process when God takes our old way of life and creates a new life, and new way of living. Once we have experienced God and Jesus in our lives, it is like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly, no way will we ever want to go back!

God bless

Eileen

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