

## SHOCKWAVE — THE RIPPLE EFFECT

There's a phenomenon in the world known as "the ripple effect." It works something like this: you're riding along in your rowboat, canoe, or small motorboat. All of a sudden you see in front of you a huge speeding ship on its way to another place. You smile as you watch the beauty of the big craft passing in front of you, maybe even give a wave — smile, that is, until the ripples created by this craft come at your boat. Soon you find yourself bobbing uncontrollably because the large waves overtook your small vessel and nearly flipped it over. Any boaters out there? Has this happened to you? Occasionally you can almost even see a slight smirk on the faces of those whose wake has brought distress to your calm world. Infuriating. Happened to me once in a rowboat fighting the wind. Wow, was I mad. Couldn't they have slowed down so the effect wasn't so strong?

That's a negative ripple effect. And there are others. Shockwaves from explosions, for instance. You see the blast, and then the ground gradually erupts in a concentric circle from the epicenter of the explosion. Nuclear bombs, tsunamis, earthquakes — they all cause this kind of effect. The negative ripple. Sometimes there is striking fear as the waves of destruction make their way out.

But there's positive ripple too. Have you ever watched "the wave" at a football or baseball game gain energy from just a few people. They encourage a section — the section encourages other sections — and the next thing you know, the energy is moving around the stadium at an unbelievable pace. It's a beautiful thing.

But that's not the only kind. How about when good things take off with the energy of a rocketship. Like the Comfort Dog ministry of Lutheran Church Charities. Less than six years ago no one ever heard of Comfort Dogs and only a few in Illinois had heard of Lutheran Church Charities. Now there are over 100 affiliate ministries, such as our Lila, working throughout the country. They've been in places no other ministry has gone, like Newtown, Connecticut — and done things few others have done in opening doors for Gospel Outreach and compassion ministry. Every year they get more and more requests for dogs. So many, in fact, that they can't fulfill them all. The Ripple Effect. One church gets involved, others see the value, and soon the wave is enveloping the country.

Or another example: when a video of someone doing a generous thing for someone else (paying their bill, helping them get across a finish line, enabling them to have something they wouldn't have) goes viral and soon the selfless person is rewarded with a barrage of support and sometimes even financial backing. Hundreds of thousands of hits enable a simple message to be shared across many platforms and opens up many hearts and purses. The Ripple Effect.

Some years ago we were blessed at Beautiful Savior, to have a few young couples in our midst. At that time we decided that we would begin our Upper Room Ministry of small groups, and Marshall Frisque, a Concordia student and employee was enlisted to begin a group for young couples. Well, our young families got together for this Bible Study, were energized, and soon we saw more and more young couples attending our church as each new couple was invited to be a part of the group. And now it has erupted into the many little children we see each week enjoying their time at Beautiful Savior and enjoying their relationships with each other.

The Ripple Effect. Just as bad ripples can be devastating – and we need protection — good ripples can start a movement and transform things.

Why do I bring this up? Well, our texts for today it is quite evident how the Resurrection of Jesus Christ had seismic wave effects upon the people who heard and believed the news. Check out our Gospel, for instance. Two men walking along a road, grieving, mourning, broken over the horrible death of the one they thought might be the Savior of the world. They're traveling away from the city – away from the place where it all happened, probably to regroup and reboot.

But then Jesus, at first unrecognized by them, opens up the word of God for them to see how the whole Old Testament, from Genesis onward, predicts His sacrificial death on the cross. They reach Emmaus, and the two men invite Jesus in to eat with them. As He is breaking the bread, they realize that it is He. And, though He disappears from them, they are so energized by His appearance that they run back to Jerusalem to tell His disciples the Good News. Next thing you know, Jesus is there with the disciples too – and more and more are filled with joy and enthusiasm – getting ready to tell the Good News to everyone. The Ripple Effect. Two guys. Eleven guys. Boom. The explosion has started and the ripple effect is about to be seen.

You really begin to see it in our First Lesson from Acts on the day of Pentecost. Peter preaches about Jesus and shares the truth about His resurrection. The listeners, it says, “are cut to the heart.” They are repentant and desirous of being connected to Him whom they crucified but

whom God raised from the dead. Did you notice the last sentence? 3000 become believers that day as the word of God and its truth ripple out among the crowds.

The Ripple Effect. The Roman Empire thought they had the market cornered on control and power. They thought theirs was a kingdom that would last forever and that their Caesars would reign and rule from age to age as gods unto themselves. Little did they realize that within a reasonably short time one of their own, Emperor Constantine, would embrace Christianity and that city which was the epicenter of pagan gods and goddesses would soon become the epicenter for the message of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed.

The Ripple Effect.

So what about you and me? How do we connect to this ripple?

Well, let me begin with the negative ripple. The Devil hasn't taken the positive ripple of the Gospel's proclamation sitting down. No, he's a warrior, and he is constantly at work trying to undermine whatever good things God can accomplish.

And so, he has raised up false religions and deceived many – from the paganism of Rome to the false prophets and teachers who have raised up new gods, new ideas, new twistings of the truth and manipulations of the facts – even to the present day.

In addition, he has sent his minions to wreak havoc through persecution, through misinformation, through abuse, and treachery. As I mentioned in this month's newsletter, Christian churches and faithful Christian men and women often find themselves in harm's way as the Evil One tries to create a ripple effect against God and His people.

Are we there for our brothers and sisters around the world to bring fortification against these seismic waves as they pass through Syria and Egypt and Iraq and Pakistan? Are we supporting their faithfulness through prayer, through financial support, through opening up our borders and our neighborhoods to welcome them to sanctuary?

My prayer is that we might be moved by God to support these things – and not just spend our prayer times and our financial stream to our own families and church and local issues. We

need to stand strong and united with our fellow Christians and ask God to halt the shaking of their world or to give them the strength to stand up under it.

Will you pray with me: (prayer said for persecuted Christians)

The Ripple Effect. Let's help to counteract these seismic waves from the Tempter with acts of mercy and compassion as well as prayer and financial support.

But that's not all. Then there's the positive Ripple Effect. How can we be involved with that?

Well, brothers and sisters, that's where we are called, like those early Emmaus disciples, like the Eleven and like the 3000 who were saved at Pentecost, to continue encouraging the wave of faith to keep on shaking.

And how? Well, how about by sharing acts of kindness and a word of hope with our neighbors and friends – especially the unchurched or unbelieving. Maybe inviting them to church, to a home bible study group, to a fellowship event, a kids event, or some other way that we try to reach out here at Beautiful Savior with the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

I'm not talking about being pushy, obnoxious, or making that your only contact with them. Do it in a natural way – as a friend, a neighbor, a co-worker. Help them out. Share your gifts, your conversation, your energy.

But that's not all you can do. How about supporting the work of outreach? Last year I was so proud that Beautiful Savior took the step of faith to step it up for missions. We looked at our support of the South Wisconsin District, of missionaries, of our Karenni friends, of prison ministries and deaf ministries and compassion efforts and global initiatives and we said, "We can do a lot more." And so we made that a plan. We know that there will always be more things we could do around here, — new but we also know that we want to be a part of the shockwave of Gospel outreach.

In addition, we have, since 2011, been involved in ministry with our Karenni friends, where the Gospel has been making significant strides touching more and more hearts and lives

each year. Next week we are bussing them up here to worship alongside of us. Take the time, next week, to encourage these new brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus. Help them know that you are excited to welcome them here – share a smile, and try their food.

In truth, the sky's the limit. There are hundreds and hundreds of ways that you can help create and support the seismic wave of the Gospel.

Will you pray with me: (prayer about our support of Gospel and global ministry.)

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, may God make your hearts burn just like those Emmaus disciples, and may you be empowered by His energy to be a part of the Ripple Effect.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.