

PLAIN TRUTH®

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A Tiny Ripple of Hope

By Greg Albrecht

Each time a human being stands up for an idea... or acts to improve the lot of others... or strikes out against injustice... he or she sends out a tiny ripple of hope. In crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a mighty current which can sweep down the most terrible walls of oppression and injustice.—June 1966

On June 6, 1966, Robert F. Kennedy (RFK), then the Attorney-General of the United States, gave a speech at the University of Cape Town which has since become known as the **Ripple of Hope** speech. RFK encouraged students who were mired in hatred and apartheid—trapped in an abyss of bigotry and racism—by asking them to think of their part in helping to change the status quo. He encouraged these students to become part of something bigger.

When we look back to the time and particular place in which this **Ripple of Hope** speech was given, through the miracle of hindsight, we might think of these words as

prophetic. At that very moment, when Robert F. Kennedy delivered the **Ripple of Hope** speech, a few miles away (just miles off the coast of Cape Town, South Africa) Nelson Mandela was imprisoned on Robben Island.

At the time of this speech Nelson Mandela had just finished serving the first two years of a 27-year prison sentence, in three separate prisons in South Africa, finally being released in 1990. No one would have thought at the time of Kennedy's speech that a convict was the **Ripple of Hope** for South Africa.

Tiny Ripple of Hope on Robben Island

How tiny, insignificant and unknown was the life of a convict when it came to the profound abuse and oppression and the horrific legacy of racism that existed in South Africa? What did this then little-known prisoner accomplish?

- Nelson Mandela would eventually lead South Africa out of its apartheid, serving as its president from 1994-1999.
- Nelson Mandela received the

Nobel Peace Prize and eventually came to be known as the Father of South Africa.

When he was imprisoned, Nelson Mandela seemed powerless and without any means to inspire and lift others out of their lives of spiritual and physical slavery. Little did anyone know that a relatively obscure prisoner, whose life for all appearances was over,

would become such a powerful instrument of peace and change in his own country! But Nelson Mandela would eventually become the **Ripple of Hope** for South Africa.

Each time a human being stands up for an idea... or acts to improve the lot of others... or strikes out against injustice... he or she sends out a tiny ripple of hope. In crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a mighty current which can sweep down the most terrible walls of oppression and injustice.

Never underestimate how Jesus can live his risen life in you to serve others, and cause ripples of hope far beyond your own life, changing the lives of others.

Young or old, we never get tired of throwing pebbles into a still pond and watching the ripples radiating in ever larger circles. When the waves reach the shore, they bounce back and their backwash interacts with other small wavelets in the pond. Scientists tell us that even when the ripples in a pond seem to disappear, their

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energy lives on in what seems to the naked eye to be the apparent tranquility of the pond.

The Tiny Ripple of Hope Saving the Doomed at Dunkirk

In May, 1940, German forces advanced into France, trapping the Allied Forces, the majority of whom in this theater of war were the British Army. They were boxed in—the German troops were closing in, and over a quarter of a million young British soldiers and 100,000 other Allied soldiers faced capture or death. The German armed forces seemed to have the English armies at their mercy, with the beaches of Dunkirk and English Channel destined to become their graveyard.

The Royal Navy estimated it could save only a small fraction of these troops imprisoned between the German Army and the English Channel. Just when all hope seemed lost, a curious flotilla of seagoing lifeboats, fishing boats, sail boats, pleasure craft, an island ferry named “Gracie Fields” and even the America’s Cup Challenger “Endeavor” appeared on the horizon.

Under air and ground cover from British and French forces, troops were slowly and methodically evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk, using every civilian boat that could be found and was seaworthy. When all was said and done, the heroic mission of this bizarre armada, manned by civilian sailors, rescued 338,688 French, British, Belgian and Dutch soldiers and safely evacuated them to the shores of England.

This ragtag fleet pulled off one of the most remarkable naval operations in history. These civilian sailors responded to the cries for help because they felt they were *part of something bigger than themselves* and thus, during one of the darkest hours for the British Empire during World War 2, provided a **Tiny Ripple of Hope**.

We all have times in our lives

when we engage in remarkable, difficult and sometimes heroic efforts because we know we are *part of something bigger*—we do what we do for others, rather than only ourselves.

A small pebble in our hands can become a mighty ripple of hope in the lives of many others. In such times when we serve and help, when we stand up for others, when we self-sacrificially extend ourselves, serving others in Jesus’ name, without knowing it at the time, we can provide a ray of sunshine, a beacon of a better life. Like a pebble thrown into a pond, our efforts to make a difference can become a **Tiny Ripple of Hope** to others.

It can be difficult when life throws us every curve ball in its arsenal, when our path seems littered with potholes and detours and ditches, when the mighty waves of the sea explode on us, when all that we see and touch seems to turn out the very opposite of what we had planned and hoped—it can be so difficult to imagine that we really are *part of something bigger*.

A Tiny Ripple of Hope on a Little Speck of this Universe

Mathematicians have estimated our galaxy (the Milky Way) in this universe to be the size of an 8½ by 11 inch piece of paper, then the map of the known universe would be about 80 miles long. On that piece of paper, the size of our solar system would be like a molecule, invisible to the naked eye.

We know planet earth is but a small part of our molecule-size solar system. So on this 80-mile map of the known universe what is the size of this “huge” planet upon which we live? Like the comparative molecule-size of our solar system, planet earth is also invisible, but far smaller and more insignificant—planet earth is but a



speck! Isaiah speaks of the nations of this earth like a “*drop in a bucket*” or “*dust on the scales*” (Isaiah 40:15).

It is to this little speck of dust on the “invisible molecule” of our solar system that God, in the person of Jesus, came. The Creator who made humans out of the “dust of the ground” (Genesis 2:7) came to our tiny particle of a planet—to our seemingly insignificant lives on this microscopic atom of planet earth, bringing a **Tiny Ripple of Hope**.

Jesus threw himself as a tiny pebble into the great cosmos of the very universe he had created—choosing this tiny little planet we call earth for beginning this **Tiny Ripple of Hope** that would radiate outwards, ever onward, growing, as it were, from a tiny mustard seed, into the kingdom of God.

In and because of Christ, by the grace of God, you are significant, even though you might seem insignificant and even invisible. It may seem to you that God may not even know you—no one else seems to recognize or know you or care about you. But God knows—he cares—and he loves you.

That is the clear message of the coming of God in the person of Jesus to be one of us, to be with us, and to be for us. The clear message of the gospel is that you are *part of something bigger* than you can see and perceive.

By the grace of God you and I have been given his favor... and in so doing he propels, energizes, enables and empowers us to pass on his love and grace to others.

We’re part of something bigger! □