

Your Ripple Effect!

Colossians 1:6-14

June 4, 2017

Pentecost

How many of you are like me and cannot resist the urge to pick up a flat rock along the shoreline of a pond or lake and skip it across the water?

I have had many rock-skipping competitions with family members! A flat rock and the flip of the elbow and wrist are techniques that I rely on to bring home the championship rock-skipping trophy!

One of the marvels at skipping rocks is to see the ripple effects it creates in the water. Each spot where the rock touches the water there is a ripple effect. The rock has disturbed the calm water and the effect is to send mini waves across the surface of the water. Wherever the rock landed, even oh so briefly, it created a ripple effect.

Today we mark on the Christian calendar a day called Pentecost. This is the day when the Holy Spirit came down on a group of followers of Jesus. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that day proved to be more than just a one-time incident.

It is as if there is a ripple effect that goes out from Pentecost that didn't just stop that day in Jerusalem. It didn't stop in Acts 2 that day. In Acts 8 the Holy Spirit comes upon the Samaritans. In Acts 10 He comes to the Gentiles (the non-Jews) in Cornelius' house. And in Acts 19 He comes to the disciples of John in Ephesus.

The ripple effect of Pentecost hasn't stopped. The ripples of His power have continued for over 2000 years. From the beginning of the Holy Spirit's presence on a 100 or so folks that first day, since then billions of lives have been affected by the ripple effect of Pentecost. Billions of lives have been saved. Billions of lives have experienced the power and presence of Christ's Holy Spirit.

You and I are here today because of the ripple effect of the Holy Spirit. As we continue our summer series on learning the Knowns of faith from the Unknowns in the bible, we come across a man who had a ripple effect on some folks in the Colossae area.

His name was mentioned in our bible reading earlier. Did you hear his name? Let me throw it out to you again because I want his life to have a ripple effect on us and to challenge us to do the same.

His name was Epaphras. The Apostle Paul mentioned his name in his letter to the Christians in Colossae. Epaphras was like a rock thrown into the Colossae pond that caused ripple effects to many.

We don't know much about Epaphras, but what we do know we can allow to affect our lives for Jesus. The Bible only mentions his name three times. One of the times is at the end of this letter in chapter 4:12,13. Listen to how Paul described him:

"Epaphras, who is one of you, says hello. What a trooper he has been! He's been tireless in his prayers for you, praying that you'll stand firm, mature and confident in everything God wants you to do. I've watched him closely, and can report on how hard he has worked for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis." (Colossians 4:2,13 MSG)

Did you pick up on the ripple effects Epaphras had on those around him?

He was a servant of Christ!

He was tireless in his prayers for others.

He was a hard worker for the cause of Christ.

He stood firm in the will of God.

He was mature in his faith.

He was confident in Christ.

Epaphras was not a trained religious person. He was simply a follower of Jesus who allowed the effect of Christ's love to guide him in his effect on those around him and beyond.

What a great effect to have on others. To be an encourager in the faith. In fact, Paul was under house arrest when Epaphras went to visit him in Rome. (Colossians 1:8). He was willing to risk his own freedom to be with Paul to get further advice and instruction on how to deal with the false teachings of the culture he lived in at Colossae.

Epaphras was not only an encourager of unity in the faith to stand strong against the false teachings of society...he was a wrestler in prayer!

He was tireless in praying for others.

There is a ripple effect that a person will never have a clue as to what kind of effect their prayers have on others.

I would imagine that Epaphras learned how to pray from Paul. We can get see the skips along the pond of prayer that Paul's prayer life made by looking at Colossians 1:9-14. Here are some of the skips, the ripple effects, of Paul's prayer plan:

He prayed that people would:

1. Understand God's will for their lives.
2. Gain spiritual wisdom and not worldly wisdom.
3. Please and honor God in their lives and choices in life.
4. Bear good fruit. (Galatians 5:22-23)
5. Grow in the knowledge of God.
6. Be filled with God's strength and not their own.
7. Have great endurance and patience.
8. Stay full of Christ's joy.
9. Give thanks always in all they experience.

Epaphras allowed Paul's prayer plan to effect his own prayer life.

This brings us to our own personal ripple effect.

What ripple effect does your life have on those around you?

You may try to get out of being skipped along the pond of life with the excuse you are really not that special of a person. You don't have the resources to make a big effect on others.

Let me share a quote that might challenge you to rethink your excuses:

"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the water to create many ripples." ---Mother Teresa

Even the smallest act of caring is like a drop of water that ripple effects others.

Jesus talked about how just offering a cup of water effects others with a demonstration of his love. (Matthew 10:42) A bottle of water to the garbage man on a hot summer day!

To create a ripple effect **stop keeping yourself to yourself.**

You need to be willing to place your life in the hands of God and allow him to throw you across the pond of life. He alone will know the effect your life will have on others.

Your choices in life don't simply affect you. Your decisions have a ripple effect on those around you...even generations to come.

When you truly love Jesus and others as yourself, what a ripple effect you can cause that will continue.

Pentecost was spirit-powered with a message. The message was about a risen Savior. The spirit-empowered message of victory being won over sin and death by Jesus happened as the people were praying!

That Pentecost power continues to ripple out to you and me today.

Every person can be a servant of Christ somehow.
Every person has the potential to have a ripple effect of prayer.
Every person can give their best in serving Jesus.
We can stand firm in our faith and grow in our faith in Christ.

I want to challenge us on this Pentecost ripple effect day to allow the power of the Holy Spirit to be in you.
There is one way we all can participate in having a ripple effect in our lives...prayer!

I want to throw this stone out to you...every Tuesday at 2:00p.m. to pray for two minutes. **(2 at 2 on Tuesday)** Pray for whatever God lays on your heart about the life and ministry of our church. You can pray for lives to come to Jesus...people to be faithful in coming to worship...financial provision...outreach ministries resources and volunteers...unity in our community...connectional ministries with other UM churches in our area.

Who knows what ripple effect this prayer will have on our church, community and our own lives. God does!

Your ripple effect begins with you!
Your ripple effect begins with prayer!
Trust God to use you and us together to bring about a ripple effect that will continue to build his kingdom one life at a time.

Life is the pond...your life is the flat rock.
Place your life in God's hands and allow him to cast you on the waters.
Watch the ripple effect your life will have each place you land in life!