

When I in Awesome Wonder...

Michigan's Golden Coast: The Changing Shore

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Erosion. Accretion. Erosion. Accretion. Erosion. Accretion. The movement of the sand upon the shore, blown by wind and carried by waves, is a constant reminder of the changeableness of this life; of our need to rest upon a firm foundation.

Working day after day at the same site along the golden beaches, I am amazed at the drastic changes that occur in a short period of time. When walking down the beach, the surface inland is dry and very difficult to walk in. Along the water's edge, it is damp, hard packed earth. At times this hard area is broad and flat. Other times, in the same spot, the waves tickle your feet when you walk between the water and a small cliff up to three feet high. The cliff has become the boundary between the soft dry sand and the water's edge. In a single day, thousands of cubic yards of sand can be moved in just a hundred feet of beach.

Over the years, tremendous changes can occur. Once forested dunes can be washed into the lake. Or, new dunes can form up to several hundred feet tall. In fact, the largest are nearly five hundred feet tall, like the Sleeping Bear dunes west of Traverse City.

One of the most fascinating examples of these changes is the movement of a stream bed as the water flows into the lake from inland. It can build a channel parallel the shore for hundreds of feet. Then the dike between the stream and the shore can break and combined with the wave action cause the stream to flow completely the opposite direction.

When a group of fathers and sons from our church hiked along the shore, we all enjoyed looking for fish and driftwood along this stream. The next day, the stream flowed into the lake nearly 300 feet north of where it had the day before.

Only a few people have the opportunity to build upon the shore. Some do not like to admit it, but building upon the dunes can be a very risky and expensive proposition. In a ten year period during the sixties and seventies the width of the *shore* went from the widest in recent memory to completely disappearing, with waves lapping at the base of the dunes. Some places the lake moved inland over three hundred feet. The houses and goods of the owners fell into the lake. We find pieces of the houses buried in the sand when the eroding winds reveal them.

There are only two ways to be completely sure that a house will stay in place. Either one must build way back from the edge of the dune in an area not susceptible to erosion, or, one must put pilings down to the bedrock clay to support the house.

By this time you see the application very clearly. Jesus is the Rock upon which we must build our house, our spiritual house. Our lives are filled with constant change: birth, death, friends, mistakes, accidents, sin, pain, suffering, riches, poverty.... We have nothing stable in our lives apart from Christ. We may not build our house upon the sand, like the foolish man. Instead, we must build upon the Rock, which is our Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is our sure foundation. We know Him through His word, written and preached. Through His word and by His gift of faith we are tied to the Rock. Thus we are made wise. And when the final great storm of life buffets us, that is, when we face death, we will be unmoved. We will stand sure. Praise to God!

We will stand Rock solid with the waves swirling around us. We will be saved. God give us that faith, we pray.

When the winds of pain buffet me,
When sickness lays me low,
In bed when Thy mercy I cannot see,
And it seems that friends all did go,
Be Thou my protection.

When the storms of life are raging,
When friends and loved ones forsake,
In loneliness and sorrow,
When it seems there is no tomorrow,
Be Thou my strength.

When temptation seeks to corrupt,
When daily cares my meditations interrupt
In times when no light in the tunnel I see,
If waves and waves wash over me,
Be Thou my foundation.

When death stands at the door,
When on life's sea I'll be no more,
When I my last breath do take
So I on earth no more awake
Be Thou my hope.

In Thee I find my strength and song.
In Thee my comfort all the day long.
In trial Thou art my protection.
In Thee is my hope and my foundation.
Thou art my God.

In Thee will I find my joy in that great day,
When in brightness all my sins are washed away.

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