

The Big Picture

Easter Sunday

April 21, 2019

Welcome to where we're learning to decrease so He can increase!



He is risen! He is risen indeed! I've decided to postpone my Easter message for two weeks; because, when the old Mosaic of Jesus was replaced this week, I was overcome. And when I sat down to write the presentation, it wouldn't stop till it filled four pages.



14 years ago we created that Jesus Mosaic with primitive technology, a brand-new invention called digital photography, and 4000 photos. There's a plaque on the bottom of the frame, which says: ***Be part of the big picture at His Place***



That Mosaic began as a fundraiser for the down payment of this property. 4,000 squares to be filled in as the funds *came in*. But, I made the mistake of having Ken Beane design the frame *before* I had any idea what kind of picture we would put in it. We tried taking a picture of kids with a *Sold* sign in front of the Ark; but ... *that frame!* Ken had it built and set up in the back, which raised everyone's expectations for the *mystery photo* to come in just a few weeks. I was in a panic! I had no idea whatsoever what to do.



So, I just kept telling everyone that they would have to wait and see; because, it was a *secret* (which it *was* ... to *me*). But, that only built up everyone's expectations. And people began trying to guess what incredible image was to come. I was praying so hard. I was at the end of myself. I didn't have a hint of an idea. Until just two weeks before we had to apply the first photos.



I came home, and my son and his friend, Chris were in the living room. And, as I passed through, Chris asked if I would tell them the "secret" of what the picture was going to be. I said *no*, I didn't want to spoil the *surprise*. And then, as I walked up our stairs, Chris said, "I only asked because I think I know what you're going to do."



I stopped in my tracks. (*Any idea! Just give me any idea!*) And so I asked what he thought. He said, "I'll wait until after, and tell you if I was right." And I said, "No! Tell me now, because ... *um ... tell me now!*" He said, "***I think you're going to take all the pictures of the people at His Place and make a big mosaic of Jesus.***" And I said, "Well, we'll just have to wait and see." But inside the fireworks were going off! Talk about an answer to prayer!

Afterward, I told him that he was not only *right*, it was *his idea!*

I immediately called Ken Ekle, who had to find a program (this was before anyone was making digital mosaics); and he had to build a computer that could create a single photo file that big.



Ken Beane assembles the photos

Then we discovered that no one could print it. But, we found a blue print shop in Mount Vernon that had just installed a huge, new, printer that could handle it. We got a scanner and digitized 12,000 photos, and Ken Ekle created the Mosaic. It was a two-week sprint that we finished the night before the first batch of photos went up.



The next day, people came in and said, "Cool. It's a big montage of His Place photos; like a big family photo album."

However, on the following Sunday, after a few hundred more photos had gone up, everyone said, "It's *making* something!" We filled in all the *ambiguous* parts; and we then had the big reveal on Easter, 2005.



We had no idea would turn into an iconic keepsake. But, totally coincidentally, we had the perfect wall space for it!

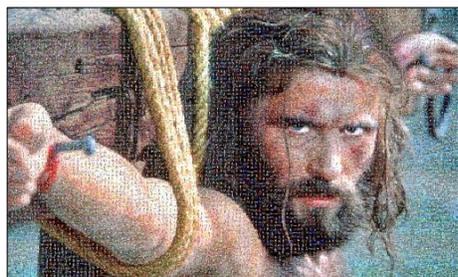
Well, *suddenly* it's 14 years later.

It's taken over a year now to sift through 105,000 photos, spanning all 36 years of His Place history, to end up with 23,000 that then had to be cropped and centered. Ken Ekle found an improved program that broke it into *9000 squares* (more than *double*), and then created an equation for each square to find its closest match in our stack of 23,000.



We had an identical copy cut up into an old photo album; so, we taped it back together so you can compare the old to the new. Are you ready? Well, first: you know how John says:

He must increase, but I must decrease. – John 3:30 NAS



We *decreased* the size of the photos from 1½" to 1" squares. And we just gave the program much more to work with. **We all assume that we see Jesus clearly ... until, that is, we decrease, and give Him more to work with, and see *more clearly*.** We often don't even know what we're missing. He must increase, but I must decrease. **The less we can tell it's me, the more we can tell it's Him;** because, when He's in me, I'm in Him. But, **until then I'm a pixel without a place.**

Apart from Him I'm robbed of meaning and purpose and definition.

We can't know what clarity is *until* we have eyes to see.

I love His expression. *His eyes.*

And, if you stop and stare and let your mind meditate, the analogies just tumble out.

When I lock eyes with this symbol of Jesus, it speaks to me. **Jesus was not a *victim* of the cross.**

He was a conqueror!

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, *fixing our eyes on Jesus*, the *author* and *perfecter of faith*, who *for the joy set before Him endured the cross*, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. – Hebrews 12:1-2 NAS

Jesus conquered the cross. Like how a woman giving birth conquers *that pain* for the incredible joy of new life to come. And, **He conquered the law, and swallowed up sin.**

... having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us [in the Law of Moses], which was hostile to us; and *He* has taken it out of the way, having nailed *it* to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a *public display of them*, having triumphed over *them* through *Him* [from the cross]. – Colossians 2:14-15 NAS

Then He conquered the grave itself. **He vacated the tomb to inhabit you.** So, He isn't quite finished conquering just yet, is He? **Now, He must conquer your heart.** And, those eyes say, "I'm coming for you." And I'm a little nervous. **His love isn't a *nonthreatening* love. His love is a *perfect* love.** Powerful. Determined. Uncompromising.

To see it, brings fear, the beginning of wisdom. (Pr 1:7) But, **to know it drives out *all* fear.** (1 Jn 4:18)



In the lobby we've hung another Mosaic, in which the size of the photos has been decreased to 3/4" squares (for a total of 16,000 pictures). It's lit up and visible from the road at night in the darkness. And, unlike this one, you can go right up to it and try to find yourself or someone you know. Like a real-life "Where's Waldo".



The big picture at His Place is Christ crucified for our sin, and risen again for our faith and hope and trust, to show us the way, the truth, and the life, as He leads us home.

You may not feel like your little square looks much like Christ in all His glory. You shouldn't. It doesn't. It's not meant to.

But together, His body, His children, **united in the Mosaic grace of Jesus** (who overcame the Mosaic Law that brought death), reveal and confess and declare Him, **fulfilling our uniquely created purpose in our little corner of His Kingdom.**

So that, as this world passes by, even as it passes away, our friends and family and neighbors can catch a glimpse, as our witness, together, shines as a light in the darkness.

We fix our eyes on Christ as Author and Finisher, so that He can fix our eyes on God as Father and Creator, so that we can continue to decrease as He continues to increase, becoming clearer and clearer as we mature in His Word, *growing smaller and smaller* until we are *swallowed up in His love and mercy and kindness*, covered completely by His blood, poured out for us by the Lamb, enthroned, who was slain and overcame.

The Bread of Life sent to us, whose body was broken *for us* and whose Word is bound *within us*.

Our Savior, Redeemer, and Lord, who leads us down here by His Spirit, the Fountain of Life, a River of Life clear as crystal, that flows from His throne to His own; that began on the cross just after he died, **when the spear pierced His side, and both water and blood began to flow, to give birth to His church, His children, so we can grow in His image, and overcome this world, to become His living body.**

His hands. His feet. His arms. Embracing one another.

A light shining on a hill. **Reaching out to this dark world, each from our own unique little corner of His Kingdom wherein He must first rule and reign in our heart.**

That's both the *big* picture at His Place and the *tiny little* pictures at His Place.

It's a call to all to come and see and to become part of the body of Christ, who lived and died and lives forever for all who will come and die to self to live in Him!

For we do not preach *ourselves*, but Jesus Christ as *Lord* ... For God, who said, "*Let light shine out of darkness,*" made *his light* shine in *our hearts* to give *us* the light of the *knowledge* of the *glory* of God in the *face* of Christ. – 2 Corinthians 4:5-6 NIV

Jesus Christ, *the face of the glory of God!*

He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Focus too close on the chaos of this world and you'll miss the big picture.

So, step back and get yourself a better perspective.

Then you'll see what's been staring you in the face the whole time.

Which, by the way, is exactly how His Word works in your heart.

It's making something!