

By: *Rev. Mark Breese*

Pastor Mark is the Agency Minister and the Director of Ministry & Community partnerships at Community Missions.

Remembering The Dance

When I am in moments of stress, I sometimes try to ease that stress by visualizing sunsets and sunrises. I choose these images because I love those moments of the day— beginnings and endings of that are dressed in beauty.

I have watched countless sunsets in my life time. I've watched the orange red dome of the sun sink slowly below the horizon, and that last moment where the very edge disappears. Sunrise on the other hand, is still a bit more of a mystery to me. I have actually only seen the very first moment of the sun rising into view a handful of times.

There was period of time in my early 20's that I decided I was going to make sure I experienced this exact moment of the sun first coming into view. So, over the course of the summer, some days I would drive to the Jersey shore in the predawn hours with the express purpose of seeing the edge of the sun as it first peaks over the horizon of the Atlantic Ocean. For as many times as I made the pilgrimage over that summer, I was not successful.



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There were clouds hanging across the horizon on *many* days. There was a huge cargo ship once—way too close to shore and in exactly the wrong spot. Mostly though, there were momentary distractions. Lots of them.

Being the Jersey shore in summer time, there of course were young women my age. Apparently, an amazing number of women like to walk on the beach in the morning. I remember the three days in a row where a pretty red haired young woman passed me and nodded and smiled, but I never worked up the courage to say hello.

There were seagulls that came expecting crusts or donuts or something. There were the crabs scurrying across the sand, hoping the seagulls did not see them. There was the predawn wind that picked up the sand and had me turn my head and close my eyes at the wrong moment. Often it was simply the empty beach and sound of the waves landing—the sweet lullaby, that closed my tired eyes as I'd nod off into a peaceful predawn snooze that ended with the newly risen sun shining in my eyes.

But by far, the most common distraction was just the wonder of what I began to think of as 'the dance' that takes place where the ocean meets the land. The eternal music for the dance is the rhythmic sound of the waves.

In 'the dance', you hear the music of the waves and see the ocean water rush up over the sand, slowing down and spreading out until it hangs, motionless, for just a fraction of a second that seems to last forever. Slowly at first, then with gathering speed, the water slides back down over the wet sand toward the ocean with (it seemed to me) outstretched hands. The water seems to gather itself as if to make a great leap and, on the down beat of the wave-music that never ends, it grasps the next wave, turns on a dime, and rushes back up the sand, churning, foaming, and spreading and then, slowing to that eternal hanging moment once again before beginning the slow slide back, gathering speed to once more meet the coming wave. Many, many times, I was caught by the dance and its eternal music. I'd shake myself and look up to see the moment of dawn had slipped through my fingers like sand once again.

At the end of that summer, I never really gruded missing the exact moment of the sun bursting over the horizon. Sure it was kind of frustrating to miss it time after time. But those moments being on the beach, with the sand, the solitude, and especially 'the dance', soothed the frustration—washed it away as easily as the waves smoothed the sand. Today, even when I am not there to see it, I know the dance goes on. It helps me in difficult times to remember the dance.

Image: *Sunrise, Long Branch, New Jersey*; by Sanford Robinson Gifford
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