

Water, water



Lord God, you are there amid the raging waves and in the cup of water offered to a child. Thank you for the creation of water. Help us to know your presence in everything, and to trust in your awesome power. Amen.

Caroline Hodgson *reflects on*
Genesis 2:4b-9. 15-end, Psalm 65 and Luke 8:22-25

Today's Old Testament, Psalm and Gospel readings all contain references to that great element upon which all life is dependent, which covers over seventy per cent of the earth – water. In the great story of creation in Genesis, it is not until God causes a stream to “rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground”, that plant life can flourish, and only then that God forms humanity.

It's been suggested that Psalm 65 was written as a hymn of thanksgiving after a time of drought. The psalmist creates a beautiful image of God irrigating the earth: “You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water... You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.”

In sharp contrast to this image of gentle, life-giving water, the Gospel today shows its terrifying, destructive potential – and yet, even here, God has power over it. When Jesus wakes in the middle of a storm to find the disciples panicking, their lives (as we imagine) flashing before them, he rebukes the “raging waves” and restores calm, to the astonishment of the petrified disciples.

Like so many things in this life, water can be benevolent and life-giving, or terrifying and dangerous. Like everything in this life, God is in control if we but realise and allow it. Even when the storm rages around us, even when we think that God is sleeping, we can relax in this sure knowledge, and allow the grace of God, which flows through everything and irrigates the whole earth and sustains all life, to flow through our very being. 🌊

Poetry and faith

R. S. Thomas (1913-2000)

by Julia McGuinness

R. S. Thomas' ministry as a parish priest in rural Wales spanned four decades across six towns from the mid 1930s. He found poetic material among isolated farming communities who were facing technological advances and threats to their Welsh identity. When asked if he was conflicted by the twin vocations of poet and priest, Thomas replied that “Christ was a poet... the New Testament was poetry, and... I had no difficulty preaching the New Testament in its poetic context”.

With his spare style, austere language and outlook, Thomas is attuned to the hard search for an apparently elusive God. He has been described as “a poet of the Cross, the unanswered prayer, the bleak trek through darkness”. Yet this makes breakthroughs of faith and vision all the more precious. In “The Bright Field”, he acknowledges that such moments are easily missed. But a sudden burst of sunshine across a field calls for our “turning/aside like Moses to the miracle/of the lit bush”. Such brightness is not incidental and temporary, but encapsulates “the eternity that awaits you”. 🌊

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.”

Psalm 23:6

Walking with Rosie

Flood

by Gillian Cooper

Our morning walk takes Rosie and me along the river. It has rained and the river is deep and fast, rushing just beneath the stone bridges, orange with the mud of the Somerset hills. Rosie stays well back. There is no flood warning, but some of the cottages have sandbags at the door, just in case.

In the beginning, Genesis tells us, there was a watery waste. God made space for creation

by dividing and controlling the waters, some above the sky, some under the earth. God keeps us safe, we are told. At any time God can open the windows of heaven, or make a fissure in the earth, and allow the waters of chaos to come rushing back.

I live in a sophisticated society, one that has learned to understand and control nature. It is good to be reminded occasionally of the ultimate power of God in our world. 🌊