

Silent Pool

Oh God, our deliverer,
in whom all the ends of the earth and the distant seas put their trust;
who by divine power fix the mountains firmly
who is girded with might, who stills the raging seas, the raging waves,
and tumultuous peoples.
Those who live at the ends of the earth are awed by Your signs;
You make the lands of sunrise and sunset shout for joy.
You take care of the earth and irrigate it; you enrich it greatly
with the channel of God full of water;
You provide grain for all; for so do You prepare it.

Psalm 65, verses 6-9.

While pondering and reflecting upon what I might write for March's newsletter, a bottle of gin on our sideboard caught my eye. "Silent Pool" intricately made gin. That is not to say that I am recommending you resort to the bottle for Lent. Indeed, many of you may choose to give up the solace of a tippie. It was the "Silent Pool" that made me think of water, think of "Still Waters." Still Waters is the theme of the Lent gatherings which will take place on Mondays in various churches in the Savernake Team. They will give time for reflection and quiet prayer.

Psalm 65 is full of imagery relating to water. The seas put their trust in God, the raging waves are stilled by the Lord and the land is irrigated. The raging of the waves is an image that caught my eye too. This week we saw the Ballet Wolfe Works relayed directly from Covent Garden. The ballet takes aspects of the work and life of Virginia Wolfe to the music by Hans Richter. The final act is entitled The Waves. I think it made an impact on all those who saw it. The presence of the sea is the backdrop against which Wolfe set her extraordinary novel "The Waves." The ballet was staged against powerful monochrome images of an angry sea, showing the changing moods of the sea. Wolfe herself writes in the novel. "I am made and remade continually. Different people draw different words from me." It was an exploration of layers of meaning.

Water is a potent image throughout the Bible. I remember being particularly entranced by the words from Psalm 65, "the river of God is full of water". As an ordinand this phrase jumping out of me when I first read it. I imagined myself in a peaceful river the cool water flowing around my body, a feeling of relief, a feeling of peace and a sense of the gentle power of God. The translation above has the channel of God full of water. This comes from the Sefaria app, which is a resource for the Jewish Community. Another translation gives, God's stream. The original Hebrew comes from the root *Peleg* which also means division; I think this is where the translation channel comes from. In the context of this Psalm it is an irrigation channel, the water dividing the dry earth: a source of life and being. This is subtly different from my vision of being immersed and upheld by the river of God. It is more about being nourished and given life by God. As Virginia Wolfe wrote, "Different people draw different words from me". Both visions of how God sustains us have their value.

Lent is a time for reflection and re-examination. The Psalm reminds us that even the distant seas put their trust in God. There are many unruly waves raging throughout the world, whether in Israel, Ukraine, in many other places of strife or in our own lives; yet they are stilled by God. Personally, I have been deeply upset and disturbed by the incomprehensible decision of the Synod of the Church of England to cease exploring stand alone blessings for same sex couples and I know I share this feeling with many other clergy.

Whatever unsettles you, whenever the waves disturb or mar the glory of creation, immerse yourself in the river or the channel of God, allow the waters to bring calm and stillness. You could even consider engaging with "Still Waters" in one of our churches this Lent.

Jonathan Meyer