

Silence is golden

Lisa Tulfer *reflects on* 1 Kings 19:9-18 and Matthew 14:22-33

Noisy weather and other disruptive natural phenomena figure largely in today's readings. The Gospel account of Jesus walking on the water and Peter losing his confidence, is a passage which many will remember from Sunday school. When Jesus gets into the boat the wind dies down and peace is restored.

In our Old Testament reading, too, there are dramatic conditions. Elijah, sheltering in a cave, is told that God will be passing by. First, there is a mighty wind, such as the Met Office might describe as "likely to cause structural damage". Next, there is an earthquake. Finally, wildfire sweeps across the countryside. But God is not in any of these noisy manifestations. In the silence which follows, Elijah hears what the King James Bible calls "a still small voice", and this is when God speaks to Elijah.

Again, the human encounter with the divine comes in the context of stillness. At various points in the Gospels we are told that Jesus went off by himself, away from the crowds, to pray. The monastic tradition values extended periods of silence, and Quakers worship largely in silence. This quality of stillness, an absence of noise and drama, can allow a particular consciousness of God. "Be still, and know that I am God!" (Psalm 46:10). 🙏

Eternal God, you meet us in silence, solitude and stillness. Help us in our busy lives and noisy world to make the time and space to find that place of peace, and to listen for your voice. Amen.



National Parks

Eryri

by Jo Jones

Formerly Snowdonia, this national park is now known by its Welsh name, Eryri, meaning "place of the eagles".

My visits here are memorable for a failed attempt to reach the top of Mount Snowdon, as stormy winds blew me sideways; for a delightful steam train trip up through the hills, followed by a disastrous teashop stop, when my then toddlers tipped over drinks; and for a rain-drenched visit to Harlech Castle.

This dramatically stunning area is said to have been saved by erratic weather from mass tourism. Yet the views of the mountains – particularly when they open up through rain clouds and the sun beams through – never fail to make me catch my breath and shut me up, while at the same time opening up new spaces in my mind and heart. The views of the sea from the mountains or the coastal footpaths bring with them the cry of choughs, kittiwakes, and gulls. I am silenced, wrapped in this audiovisual psalm to our God.

<https://snowdonia.gov.wales> 🙏

“You show me the path of life, in your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.”

Psalm 16:11

World Humanitarian Day

by Caroline Hodgson

On 19 August 2003, a bomb attack on the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, Iraq, killed twenty-two humanitarian aid workers. Five years later, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution designating 19 August as World Humanitarian Day (WHD). Each year, WHD brings together partners from across the humanitarian system to advocate for the survival, well-being and dignity of people affected by crises, and for the safety and security of aid workers.

The UN points out that in times of great need or disaster, the first to respond are often those affected themselves, before volunteers and professionals from aid agencies arrive to support the ongoing recovery. WHD shines a light on the work of all those who deliver urgent health care, shelter, food, protection, water and much more. Many are Christians obeying God's called to ease suffering and bring hope in the face of devastation.

On Saturday let's make these brave, compassionate people the focus of our prayer.

www.un.org/en/observances/humanitarian-day 🙏