

Psalm 65: 9 – 13; John 4: 1 - 14

'Water in 2018'

A few months ago I was on a retreat at a centre close to St Asaph – it's known internationally – people from all over the world come - and in an introductory session, someone from Kenya asked if the tap water was safe to drink ... reassurance was quickly given plus the advice – "It's beautiful Welsh water – so drink plenty of it!"

What we take for granted with water was back in mind later on in the retreat – apparently there was a burst water main close by ... and we were warned that the water would be off from 10pm that night ... with no definite time that it would come back on Now, in your own house – on your own farm – you know what to do ... do whatever you need to with containers ... including buckets or bowls of water next to the loo ... but no-one gave any advice of this kind with 60 or 70 people in the place ... thankfully – the water was back on quickly!

Water has been in the news frequently this year.

For us in Shropshire:

Early on – our fields were water logged

Later – the ground and the grass, the plants – including some crops – looked parched.

Elsewhere – there have been floods in some places and massive wildfires aided by drought in others.

The Arthur Rank Centre had this piece on its website:

The weather has made this year a challenging one for many farmers. For sheep farmers the problems began in the autumn of 2017 when prolonged cold and damp affected ewe fertility. The snow and cold temperatures of the 'Beast from the East' arrived at lambing time and there were losses of new lambs and ewes as well as cattle resulting in cash flow problems with fewer lambs to sell in the autumn and higher prices for replacement ewes.

The prolonged drought in some areas has meant that farmers are now feeding their livestock with forage made for the winter months as there isn't enough nutritious grass. Many will not have been able to produce as much silage as normal and this, coupled with early feeding, may well lead to shortages and higher prices. This may result in further problems when hay/silage stocks run out before the winter is over causing more stress and financial pressures.

In the arable sector, the cold spring meant that some crops were sown late and established crops had their growth affected. Many crops are being harvested early but lack of water means that yields may be low. There will be regional variations as to the quality and amount of grain, fruit and vegetables that are harvested.

Once again – water much at the forefront of our minds – as it was for the psalmist – the person who wrote our first Bible reading

There are some well-informed predictions that the most precious commodity on earth will soon not be oil or gold ... but water.

As Christians, we do value what we have been given in the natural world – and we are used to thinking about sharing resources fairly. We recognise that what we have been given is not to be hoarded selfishly – but used to bring life to others – which is where our second Bible reading ended – eternal life is about life in all its fullness now as well as beyond death.

Often in the past we've concentrated on food as we consider what to be thankful for and what to share. . In recent years, we've perhaps become more aware that access to water is even more fundamental. No growth of crops without water, no livestock or human flourishing without clean water.

This harvest time – as in the last few years, we have the opportunity to contribute to Water Aid – which is a way for us to help communities elsewhere in the world with this most precious and necessary aid to life and health.

May we give generously today in thankfulness for our own water situation and supply.

And remembering that some of our own farmers and farming families are struggling – that generous giving will then be shared with the Farming Community Network Charity who do a great deal with famers who need support in this country.

Amen.