

Thought for the Day 22nd May 2020 from Adriaan van Klinken (All Hallows)

A God of Miracles?

Readings: Numbers 20.1-13 and Luke 7:11-17

“Our God is a God of miracles”, some Christians say. They point to bible stories such as in today’s readings: water gushing out of a rock in the desert, and a dead man being brought back to life. They also point to stories of people today who, in miraculous ways, have experienced God’s intervention in their lives.

To be honest – and with all respect for the ways in which other people experience God – I have my reservations about this emphasis on the God of miracles. I prefer seeing the presence of God in the ordinary things of life, rather than in extra-ordinary, seemingly unnatural interventions. My reservations are particularly strong in these days of a global pandemic, in which over 328,000 people worldwide have already died of a new virus. No divine miracles did save their lives, or brought them back to life.

So, what is the point of these miracle stories in the Bible? In both cases, these are stories of survival. The people of Israel were stuck in the desert where they and their livestock would die *en masse*, if no water would be found. God instructs Moses to pour water out of the rock, so the people will survive and will acknowledge that God comes to their rescue and is holy.

The widow of Nain had lost her only son – he was supposed to have taken care of his mother, but now she is mourning his death, and therefore her own future. Jesus calls the dead young man to life, and gives him back to his mother. Her future is secured. And the people acknowledge that in Jesus God is coming to help his people.

Both stories express the faith that, when our future is bleak and our life is under threat, there still is hope. There is hope, because we are in God’s safe hands. That doesn’t mean that God will always miraculously intervene – in most cases, also in the Bible, that does not happen. Yet it means that we, in life and in death, can be sure that God cares.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ns2AnDyxTd0>