

With God in the Garden

Read John Ch 4 v 1-15

A small stream runs underground and overground through the centre of Criccieth. Its crystal clear waters are usually fast flowing as they make their descent and run into the sea on the beautiful beach below which is part of the larger sweep of Cardigan Bay. In the past there were two wells that drew water from this stream, one of which is situated in what is now a delightful tiny terraced garden. I visited this garden as part of "The Open Gardens" afternoon during Criccieth Festival Week in June 2014. The well has been turned into a small garden fountain by its present owners and as I sat there in the peace and tranquillity surrounded by the wonderful blooms and smells of so many different flowers my thoughts drifted to the story of the Samaritan Woman in our reading who met with Jesus by the well.

Water, as we know, is at the centre of all gardens. The Garden of Eden had a stream flowing through it which then divided into four rivers (Genesis Ch 2 v 10-14). Water is essential for plant and humans alike and it was for this reason that Jesus and the Samaritan Woman met – their need for a drink – to quench their thirst in the heat of the day. Jesus offered "living water" which to the Jews meant running water. This well offered, not running water, but water from a stagnant pool. Knowing this and still taking Jesus' words literally, the woman asks "From where are you going to get this running water"? Jesus, of course, was talking of quenching the thirst of the soul not the body – water which was a gift only from God.

We are all so very different on the outside but deep down we are the same. We all need something to sustain us through life- something to quench our thirst – which to a Christian only Jesus can supply.

Going back to that sunny afternoon in Criccieth in 2014, I visited 8 of the 10 "open gardens" and found such a diverse selection of God's creation, cared for and nurtured by clever human beings, one of whom was a sculptor. He had created magnificent sculptures from wood, stone and metal. Another garden incorporated an art studio where the artist painted for pleasure, capturing the wonderful hills, mountains and, of course, seascapes which abound in Wales.

God was in every garden, large or small, terraced or gently undulating, formal or delightfully wild. He was there allowing His life – giving water to flow to plants and humans alike.

Sit quietly by some source of water or merely in your own garden and meditate on this prayer

Lord I thank you for your living water
It never fails me - always refreshing
A cooling calm to my sometimes weary spirit

For Discussion

1. Isaiah Ch 58 v1-12 and Jeremiah Ch 31 v 1-14 both refer to people being like well watered gardens. Discuss one or both of these passages.

2. Do you know what gives this life – giving water for other faiths e.g. for Muslims, Hindus or Sikhs?