

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June – Kingfisher moments

1 Kings 19:1-15

Galatians 3:23-29

Luke 8:26-39

I wonder if there has been a “wow” moment for you this past week. Something has happened, or someone has said something or you have seen something that has stopped you short in your tracks. Has made you say wow! That’s amazing; that’s fascinating; that’s really give me something to think about.

It might have been something quite small. A sound, a word, a snatch of a conversation. It could have been something much bigger. Some really good news maybe or something you’ve read that has helped you see things more clearly. It could have been – well almost anything that caused you to pause and take notice.

For me, it was while I was at the Diocesan Clergy conference this week. No, spending 48 hours in the company of a 100 of my fellow clergy wasn’t the wow moment. The wow moment happened early on Wednesday morning as I went for a walk on my own in the sunshine before breakfast. I left the conference centre and walked up a lane, not really knowing where it would take me. I climbed over a stile and emerged into a lovely grass and wild flower meadow which stretched away into the distance down the hill. The wow moment came as I walked down the track across the meadow in the early morning sunshine, a splendid view of fields and trees ahead and above me and seemingly all around me the beautiful sound of a skylark singing. Wow.

So how about taking a moment now. Think back over the past week or so. Perhaps you too can recall a wow moment. Talk to the person sitting next to you or behind you. Share the moment and try to put into words why it was so special.

Anyone want to share their wow moment with us all?

Our gospel reading tells us the story of Jesus healing a man who was possessed. Perhaps today we might put his condition down to some mental illness or psychiatric disorder. I'm not sure that matters too much. What does matter is that Jesus healed him. He was restored to wholeness and his life was transformed.

The people of his town found it hard to take it all in. They could see that something amazing had happened, that the man had been changed, but they weren't able to comprehend it. One might have expected them to welcome Jesus as a healer and miracle worker; might have expected them to welcome him as one who had come from God, but they rejected him and asked him to leave. They were afraid.

The man however did recognize Jesus for who he was and wanted to follow him, but Jesus told him to stay and go back to his home – his real home not the place where he had been living amongst the tombs; to go back to his home and to tell others about him.

Wow. What a story. What a transformation.

And if we took our Bibles and looked at the stories that are in Luke's gospel before and after this one I am sure there would be more wows.

Just before, for example, is the story of the disciples on a lake in their boat as a storm brews. There is a gale; the waves are getting bigger and threatening to capsize the boat; Jesus is in the boat with them, but he is asleep seeming unaware of what is happening and the danger they are all in. They wake him up. He rebukes the wind and the waves. All is calm. They are amazed. Wow

And all around stories of healings and people being brought back from the dead.

Wonderful stories of God at work through Jesus. Wonderful stories that inspire and teach us about the power of God at work through Jesus and amongst us. Wow.

But for many, probably most of us such stories – wonderful as they are – don't really resonate. We have simply not seen God at work in our lives in that kind

of way. And far from inspiring us, they could actually lead us to questioning whether God is with us at all.

Lets hold that thought for a moment as we think about that Old Testament reading. Apologies that it isn't the one printed on the reading sheet – it is actually the alternative reading set for today and I felt it was well worth having instead.

The wise prophet Elijah is on the run from the authorities. He finds himself in the desert. He complains to God about his lot. Why are things like this? Why does everything go wrong for me? He hears God telling him to go to Mount Horeb – a holy place where God has revealed himself in the past.

He is on the mountain and is waiting for God to make himself known. Waiting for a great sign. Waiting for a wow moment.

There is a wind (often in the past a sign of God's presence) but no sign of God  
There is an earthquake (again this had been in the past a sign of God being there) – but again no sign of God.

There is a fire – and maybe Elijah's thoughts turned to Moses meeting God in the burning bush – but once more no sign of God

Then there is silence. Sheer utter silence. And it is in the silence that the wow moment comes and Elijah recognizes that God is there with him. Perhaps God had been there the whole time and Elijah just hadn't noticed.

For us in our daily lives we may not see dramatic healings, or storms being stilled. We may not see dead people being brought back to life or those with debilitating conditions brought back to full health. But that shouldn't stop us looking out for God. Looking at people, things, and the world around us. Listening, looking, absorbing. Keeping our eyes and ears open for those moments – wow moments we could call them – where God reveals himself.

At the conference this week former Archbishop Rowan Williams was talking about this. Looking out for the presence of God. Keeping alert for moments where we see him – in other people, in the natural world, in the way events just hold together. He used an illustration that has stuck with me.

Imagine walking alongside a stream. You are alert and aware of what's going on around you. Listening to the babbling of the stream and the birds singing, watching the leaves and branches in the breeze, smelling the flowers and plants on the bank. And you notice the flash of blue as a kingfisher darts past. There for a second and gone again. Wow.

You have not been looking for a kingfisher, but you have been aware of what's all around you and you notice it. A wow moment. Or perhaps we should rename it as a kingfisher moment. If you had not been looking around the moment would have gone unnoticed.

It's a good and helpful discipline to take stock at the end of each day, to look back and think about what has happened, and where we have seen God at work. To look back at those wow moments, those kingfisher moments. Because these are the moments where God can be seen

The more we do this the easier it will become. We will find ourselves noticing God more. We will see God in other people, in the world around us. We will hear him as people speak. We will recognize that he has been behind the way things have happened. We will notice his presence in buildings like this one, on mountain tops or as we gaze out to sea. We will also see him as we walk along the Stratford Road or do the shopping in Sainsburys. And we will praise him for it.

In some churches people are encouraged to share stories of God at work in their lives, to share their kingfisher moments, with the whole church. Not to brag or boast about how good or how special they are as people but to encourage others. Perhaps we could do that here some Sundays as we slowly begin to appreciate that God is all around us every day of our lives.