

Water Water!

Phil Jump reflects on our long hot summer and the flooding of the Thai footballers' caves, and on how shortage and flooding can be a matter of life and death. He shows from Scripture that it is a divine and noble management task to contain the harmful influence of the waters.

I live in the North West of England, which means I am suddenly faced with putting this article together without the aid of a hosepipe! This is the consequence of a recent spell of unusually (and delightfully!) hot, dry and sunny weather – or at least that's how I see it. Others, who have taken to social media or provided the ubiquitous “vox-pops” for regional news programmes, blame it on the failure of the water companies, corporate greed, leaks in the system, government under-investment, poor planning, lack of customer service, and so I could go on – in fact the only two things that seem to have escaped the finger of blame (for once!) are the E.U. and/or Brexit.

Water seems to be very much in the news at the moment, for while the reservoirs of northern England have been seeping ever lower, stories of the bravery and ingenuity of a team of British rescue divers (along with individuals of several other

nationalities) are also populating our evening bulletins. The plight of the young Thai footballers has been an international concern, and while we can delight at the success of their rescue, there is also a tinge of irony to these two stories. While the UK authorities are struggling to cope with a lack of water, in Thailand the problem was having too much of it!

At one level, water is a completely innocuous substance, yet our ability or inability to control its behaviour and availability can be a matter of life and death, despite the advances and sophistications of our modern world. It is notable that God's relationship with water is one that our Scriptures portray as defining the measure of his greatness and power. The Old Testament Psalmist speaks of waters being tamed, controlled and commanded as expressions of majesty, while in the New, Jesus leaves his disciples in awe after commanding a storm to be still.

It seems to me that our faith has a key role in giving us a truer perspective on things, so the point of exploring faith and work is to give us a more appropriate take on the world of business and commerce. What then, might our recent pre-occupations with water have to teach us?

Firstly, it might remind us of the blessing and benefit of work. Those Psalms remind us that it is a truly divine and noble task to contain the harmful influence of the waters and protect those in peril at their rising. Sure, many of those international divers described what they do as a hobby; a way in which, as cave divers, they are always there for one another. But the equipment that they used, the logistics needed to get it all in place and the processes of organisation and planning to make it all happen are all the fruits of human enterprise. If work is a sacrament, then here is one example that

The moment British divers reached the boys lost for 10 days in the Thailand cave



Photo: Sky News