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Rain has seldom been far from the news headlines for some weeks now. The Meteorological Office has issued severe warnings concerning its destructive power, as huge tides and water-sodden land bring anguish to people's lives. People want the rain to stop.

Rain is also a theme that runs through the Bible. It seems that for biblical lands, there is a constant concern about rain – drought and thirst dogged, and still do, the lives of the peoples of the Middle East. Rain was generally welcome, looked out for, and on many occasions rain is used as an image to denote refreshment, bounty, generosity, life even.

So, we have two contrasting attitudes towards rain. When reading the Bible we need to be aware that the climate, the terrain, the social circumstances and contexts depicted are often very different from those we meet in Sudbury and elsewhere in the UK. And maybe that makes it difficult for us at times to identify with certain parts of the Bible - Elijah staying with the widow of Zarephath after the brook he had taken shelter by dried up; Jesus spending 40 days in the completely arid wilderness.

On the other hand, despite these differences, what is certain is that the Christian message of forgiveness and reconciliation brought by Jesus is constant and applies in all ages and all places. The God who rescued Elijah from thirst and hunger and sustained Jesus during his time in the wilderness still has a role to play in our 21st century lives. To feel the love of God washing over us, refreshing us, drenching us is the greatest experience we can ever enjoy.

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