

It Had Stopped Raining

Niall Williams begins *This Is Happiness* with four simple words:

“It had stopped raining.”

In Ireland, rain is more than weather. It is part of the landscape, part of the rhythm of life, and part of the Irish imagination. Rain nourishes the emerald fields, softens the hills, and shapes the character of the people who live there. Yet in the opening line of the novel, the rain has finally stopped.



Those four words signal that something is changing.



A season is ending. A new chapter is beginning.

For the people of Faha, the small village at the center of the story, life is about to be transformed. Electricity is coming. New possibilities are arriving. Old stories are about to intersect with new ones. The ordinary routines of life will suddenly be seen in a different light.

The same can be true for us.



Each of us experiences seasons of waiting—times of uncertainty, grief, longing, or simply wondering what comes next. Then, often when we least expect it, the clouds begin to part. A conversation, a friendship, a journey, a prayer, or a moment of clarity reminds us that God is still at work.



As Lynn and her fellow pilgrims travel to Ireland, perhaps this opening sentence offers an invitation. Leave behind the noise and hurry of everyday life. Notice the beauty around you. Listen for the stories carried in the wind, the stone walls, the ancient churches, and the people you meet.



Perhaps this pilgrimage begins exactly where the novel begins: **It had stopped raining.**

This Is Happiness

The title of Niall Williams' novel sounds simple, almost understated. Yet by the end of the story, it feels profound. The novel suggests that happiness is not something we conquer, accumulate, or chase down the road. It is not found in perfect circumstances or extraordinary achievements.

Happiness is something we notice.



It appears in conversations that linger long after the tea is gone. It lives in friendships that grow unexpectedly. It emerges in shared laughter, remembered stories, and moments of gratitude that arrive without warning.

The people of Faha discover that life's greatest treasures are often hidden within ordinary days.

That truth lies at the heart of every pilgrimage.

When we travel to a sacred place, we hope to encounter something meaningful. Yet the greatest gifts are often the ones we never planned. A quiet moment of prayer. A new friendship. A breathtaking view around a bend in the road. A sense of gratitude for the people who walked before us and the companions walking beside us now.

For those tracing family roots, happiness can also be found in remembering. Our ancestors endured hardships, crossed oceans, and faced uncertain futures. Their courage became the foundation upon which our lives were built.

For those traveling through Ireland, happiness may be found in the simple grace of being present. Watching the light change across a green hillside, listening to music in a village pub, sharing stories with fellow travelers, or feeling unexpectedly close to God.



By the end of the journey, we may discover what the people of Faha learned:

Happiness is not somewhere else. It is here. It is now. It is found in friendship, gratitude, pilgrimage, and the everyday grace that surrounds us when we finally slow down enough to notice.