



A THOUGHT FOR THE WEEKEND

20th January 2023

"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end;"

Lamentations 3:22 (New Revised Standard Version)

In the latter part of last year we were caused to reflect on the loss of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Anyone in the country (and in the Commonwealth and the world) under 70 had never known another monarch in the UK. We are now adjusting to (*and praying for!*) King Charles III, perhaps especially in the light of recent negative publicity.

The Queen was a seemingly permanent figurehead, a model not just of sovereignty but of life lived in the light and love of God and of Jesus Christ who, she said on several occasions, was her guiding light and eternal hope. I have heard it said of her late Majesty, that 'she offered friendliness but not friendship'. Human limitations and the responsibilities and risks of her role would explain that. To paraphrase the words of 'Alice' in A. A. Milne's little song: *"I wouldn't be Queen for a hundred pounds"*. (The Christopher Robin and Pooh generation may remember that!)

The late Queen's example has led me to reflect on the nature of God's sovereignty, expressed in His love: always the same, consistent, yet shown in many forms. He offers infinitely more than an earthly monarch's 'friendliness but not friendship'; -our loving Father God offers His divine love. The Hebrew word often used is 'hesed' (חסד, pronounced kheh-sed"), which is translated in various ways, each trying to capture the depth of meaning. It is the steadfast, enduring, compassionate, personal, self-giving love of God. Lamentations 3:22 captures something of it, but there are many other references (try Psalms 118 and 136, for example, or Jeremiah 31:3). This is the love of God shown to us "in these last days" (Hebrews 1:2) in Jesus Christ, and now, by His Holy Spirit (we pray!) reflected through us. To use a 'theological' term this is 'incarnational', God made flesh in Christ and now in us. You and I are -in that sense- *Jesus*, in whatever we do, and whatever we are. We are the body of Christ on earth.

I hope we may be encouraged and inspired with the truth that every aspect of our life and work is part of that body of Christ, enriching us within, and reaching out from us to those around, even in the most ordinary and mundane things. Our smile is His smile, our touch is His touch, our voice is His voice. As God's children this is, if we may borrow a colloquialism, 'what gets us up in the morning'! It is our motivation, our ongoing vision, our privilege and calling, whatever our age and stage, our circumstances and activities. (And yes, that's *even* you -and me- 'warts and all'!)

May God bless you with joy and a sense of fulfilment today, as you enjoy being His child, whatever part of His body you are at the moment!