



A THOUGHT FOR THE WEEKEND

28th April 2023

"I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you."
Isaiah 46:4

On a children's holiday club years ago, one activity involved walking along a stony path. A barefoot straggler turned round as I approached and just said, "Carry me!".

It stuck in my mind; an apparently casual request that you have probably heard and responded to sometime. But I've considered what was going on in me in that moment, and it has made me reflect on God's words, "I will carry you". The child said, "Carry me!"; what I 'heard' was, "I need you; I trust you." The joy in responding was not just in saving sore feet, but in being needed, trusted, asked, and feeling -in a small matter- fulfilled.

So here's a question: *Does God feel fulfilled?* Does he derive joy when we turn to him? Yes, "there will be ... rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:7,10), but what about God's child's daily appeals to him? Does he hear our silent cry, "I need you; I trust you?" Surely, he who "perceives our thoughts from afar" (Psalm 139:2) hears the hidden messages behind our prayers. Our Father knows our trust and love of him, feeble though they are, as surely as he hears our clumsy prayers or desperate cries. He understands us more deeply than we do, more clearly than we can express (Psalm 38:9). I hope, in that way, we bring him joy and fulfilment, when we turn to him, like that of an adult responding to a child's need.

God's words through Isaiah 46:4 fill out the picture, not just of his ability to carry us, but of his willingness: "I have made you and will carry you; I will sustain and I will rescue you". Isaiah 46 comes at the end of a whole section beginning at Chapter 40, of comfort and assurance for his people in desperate need. Surely God derives joy in comforting and rescuing his loved ones, as in the parables of lost-and-found in Luke 15. Think of the prodigal's father, for example; -as well as the joy of seeing his son returning there must have been fulfilment in that fatherly embrace (Luke 15:20). Dad was needed, wanted, and could be trusted.

We read of Jesus that, "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross". (Hebrews 12:2) What was -*what is*- the source of that joy? To see countless redeemed worshippers in the presence of God? Yes, -but also for Jesus to know that his agonising self-sacrifice accomplished it. "It is finished." ...I am fulfilled.

So from the little matter of carrying a child over a stony path, and from *any* task we perform, small or great, we derive joy and fulfilment. "...*what I do in anything to do it as for Thee ... This is the famous stone that turneth all to gold;*" (George Herbert, 1593-1633 'The Elixir'). Thus we are privileged to be given a tiny insight into the joy and fulfilment of God, when we turn to him today and say, "Carry me!"; it is a joy and fulfilment we share when doing anything "*as for him*".