

1st May 2020

Predictable

“He is ... a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

Bible, Isaiah 53:3

My granny went to church every Sunday, a Salvation Army meeting on a Tuesday ... and the Bookies every day! Betting was part of her life. She could rattle off the result of 50p bet on a 3-to-1, 6-to-4 and 2-to-1-on treble at the age of 95 before I got a pencil and paper out. But there was a problem. If betting had been predictable, my granny would have been wealthy – even with 50p stakes. But studying form; following a successful trainer; looking at breeding; choosing a favourite jockey ... count for nothing in horse-racing. She lived every day with unpredictability.

There is much in our Covid-19 crisis which is unpredictable: the death-toll; duration of the lockdown; economic cost; our understanding of the virus. But for as much as we *don't* know, there's a lot that's predictable. In my work, one of these is the way grief affects us.

We are all “acquainted with grief”. But aspects of the present crisis will exacerbate that: not being with a loved one when they die; excluded from attending a funeral; missing out on a hug. Yet, grief will still follow predictable patterns: disbelief, tiredness, anger, waves of emotion, low mood, little motivation and loss of hope – all predictable. How do we know? Because that's what people have *always* found in bereavement. Reactions to loss are almost always normal, well known and predictable.

That's not something we appreciate when what's happening feels as unpredictable as my granny's winnings at the Bookies. But don't panic! No matter how strange your feelings are, they're likely to be a normal response to your loss. And keep talking! Don't bottle it up. Share how you are with people you trust. Let them listen. Hear them give you the reassurance of normality. And be patient with yourself and others.

When life is unpredictable, be reassured of your humanity. In your sorrows, you'll grieve as you're expected to. You'll grieve as you must.

A prayer for today

Predictable God, accept me as I am, even in my sorrows. Reassure me of the normality of my grief, which, after all, I know you are well-acquainted with. Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>