

23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020

## Joy

**“Surprised by joy – impatient as the wind.”**

*William Wordsworth, Surprised by Joy*

If you've been following the saga of my use of jigsaws during lockdown, you'll recall that I sourced a jigsaw on-line from China which turned out to be a "mini puzzle" and not full size. Yes, it had the requisite 1000 pieces, but each piece was no bigger than a 5p coin, and the measurements of the completed jigsaw were 16"x11" and not the usual 30"x21". I know the *exact* measurements because my wife and I finished the *Ancient Bookshelf* jigsaw last weekend, and it was an absolute pleasure!

In truth, we'd approached our Chinese puzzle with apprehension. But we were surprised how easy it was (more enjoyable than some other jigsaws) and we finished it record time. A jigsaw which surprised us with its dimensions and the size of the pieces, had even more surprises in store. "Life is full of surprises", we say, some good and some bad, some welcomed and some hated. But surprises, in many guises, are a part of life.

C S Lewis published his partial autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, in 1955. (It's a coincidence that the woman he was to marry a year later was called Joy.) It describes his life from childhood to his embrace of Christianity in 1931. His purpose was to explain his "accidental discovery" of, and life-long search for, what he labelled as "joy", a joy so intense it couldn't be explained in words. He'd been struck with "stabs of joy" throughout his life, but, in time, gave himself fully to the belief that joy can be a permanent phenomenon, deeper than passing pleasures, a signpost to a fuller life.

People said to him, "What! Have you felt that too? I always thought I was the only one." But C S Lewis knew that joy belongs to us all. So, if you have joys today, I hope they bring you pleasure. But I pray such pleasures will be more than "stabs of joy" but will be signposts pointing you to a deeper fullness that makes your life complete. Like C S Lewis, you may not be able to explain it in words, but it will be enough to be "surprised by Joy".

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, surprise me with your Joy today, that I might see beyond worldly pleasures to the fullness of your grace, mercy and peace. Amen.*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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