

25th March 2021

Odd

“Nothing odd will do long.”

Samuel Johnson, James Boswell, 'Life of Samuel Johnson'

Samuel Johnson may well be wrong. Some odd things *do* last for a long, long time – especially in memories that make us smile ...

When I was a parish minister, my church arranged an annual trip for the Sunday School children and their families – known as “The Sunday School Picnic”. We usually went to a Country Park or the grounds of a big house, the day’s celebrations consisting of games and races, and, of course, the enjoyment of a picnic. We had some lovely times together.

Integral to this church’s Sunday School day-out was a fancy-dress parade. After we’d all eaten, the children would be dressed in their outfits on a given theme – Nursery Rhymes, Movies, Song Titles, or the like. It was the highlight of the day, and some of the adults joined in the spirit of the occasion and bedecked themselves in appropriate costumes too.

One year, however, one of the adults got it quite wrong. Not realising that the Fancy Dress Parade had a specified “slot” in the day’s programme, he took the invitation to “bring your fancy-dress” to mean that you wore your fancy-dress costume for *the whole day*. He’d hired a full-sized chicken outfit and was greeted with much applause when he appeared at the start of the day colourfully dressed as a chicken, when everyone else was in shorts and T-shirts. He’d entered into the spirit of things, that’s for sure. But it was very strange to see him running in the adults’ egg-and-spoon race and helping the children with their picnics dressed as a life-sized, feathered chicken. Odd? Indeed it was, and a great story lives long in the memory. But did it spoil the day? Not a bit of it. *He* may have felt odd, and looked odd, and stood out in his oddness from the rest. But he just got on with it and enjoyed the day with the others. And the others just got on with it too and enjoyed their day with him.

The Bible tells us we’re all made in the image of God, even those who may feel odd or out of place. Even life-sized, colourful, feathered chickens are part of the rich variety of the world we live in – thank God!

A prayer for today

Odd? Not the way you see me. Odd? Not the way I should see others either. Amen.

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