

29<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## Feelings

**“He nursed the feelings these dull scenes produce,  
And loved to stop beside the opening sluice;  
Where the small stream, confined in narrow bound,  
Ran with a dull, unvaried, sad’ning sound;  
Where all presented to the eye or ear,  
Oppressed the soul! with misery, grief and fear.”**

*George Crabbe, The Borough (1810)*

Pondering my reflections on preaching yesterday, I got to thinking about the importance having opportunities to express our feelings. We’re familiar with this scenario on TV: after a sporting event, an interviewer will collar a participant, stick a microphone under their nose and ask, “And how do you feel?” It’s hard to express how you feel at any time, let alone being asked while you’re panting for breath, or holding onto a barrier in case you fall over, or doubled up in pain – or, ever worse, after you’ve been defeated. No wonder people become monosyllabic or resort to clichés.

In my work with bereaved people, we help people express their feelings. We’re told we live in a more open society, where people wear their hearts on their sleeves more than in past generations. But that’s not my experience in bereavement work. We live in isolated units, with little modelling of the true nature of grief around us, and with few opportunities to share in an environment of genuine empathy. How important it is, therefore, for a grieving person to be encouraged to express their feelings, to discover normality in the response of others, and on-going support from people facing the same issues and dealing with the same feelings.

The “dull, unvaried, sad’ning” sound of grief is the better for being expressed. What oppresses the soul benefits from being exposed to “the eye or ear” of people who will understand out of their own experiences. “Misery, grief and fear” are common aspects of loss. But how are we going to know that unless we are comfortable sharing how we feel with others?

When George Ridding said in his 1885 sermon, “I feel a feeling which I feel you all feel,” how healing might it be for people in the depths of despair in their bereavement to hear that applying directly to them?

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, I have no words today. So I’ll just feel your presence. That’ll be enough. Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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