

10th April 2022

Palm Sunday

Service

**“All service ranks the same with God –
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
Are we: there is no last or first.”**

Robert Browning, Pippa Passes

On Palm Sunday, my mind turns to “The Donkey” by G K Chesterton.

*When fishes flew and forests walked
And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born.*

*With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil’s walking parody
On all four-footed things.*

*The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.*

*Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.*

I’m no English scholar and won’t offer an analytical critique of a fine poem. So I’ll simply say this: this poem speaks to me of service by those the world might consider to be a “walking parody” or “tattered outlaw”, and whom we might seek to “scourge” or “deride” as being of little value. Browning reminds us: “All service ranks the same with God ... there is no last or first.”

So I think today of Rab, a hospice patient, who had swept the floor and disposed of the garbage in a small factory. Rab found himself in the next bed to Trevor, the Managing Director of that factory, in their final days. And it was Rab, above anyone else, who ministered to Trevor. It was Rab who stayed awake during Trevor’s final night. It was Rab who was holding Trevor’s hand while he died. Like Chesterton’s donkey, Rab also had his hour, and that “fierce hour and sweet” was about loving service.

A prayer for today

Servant Christ, as I give myself to your service, may I always value the service of others. Amen

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