

21<sup>st</sup> April 2022

## Tears

**“Sweet tears! the awful language, eloquent  
Of infinite affection; far too big  
For words.”**

*Robert Pollock, The Course of Time (1827)*

I'm told that the following story comes from the pen of Rabbi Harold Kushner, though I've also come across it in different forms attributed to others. But, nonetheless, the essence of it remains the same.

A little boy is sent to the store by his mother for some groceries. When he hasn't returned home at the expected time, she naturally becomes worried. Five minutes, ten, fifteen, her anxiety increases. Just then, the lad come back, whistling and singing. His mother can't suppress her concerns and remonstrates with the youngster. "You're late, child! Where have you been? Didn't you know I'd be worried?" The boy replies, "But ... but ... but mum! On my way home I met my pall, and his bike was broken. So I stopped to help him." "Bike? *You?* But you're too little, and you know *nothing* about bikes." "I *know* mum," the lad responds. "So I did what he needed. I sat beside him on the grass and I helped him cry."

In my hospice, a profoundly Christian man whom I knew well met me outside his wife's room. She was dying, and he'd obviously been crying. When he saw me, his face turned to anger. He "invaded my space", stood nose to nose with me and expressed his brokenness in these words: "Your God is a bastard!" At that moment, I knew I had to enter his world, not with certainties but with empathy, not to push away his anger but to understand it. And I heard myself saying, "You know, you're probably right." Bad ministry? Letting God down? Ducking the issue? You decide ... For at that moment, an angry and distressed man fell into my arms and cried on my shoulder – as I cried on his. As we metaphorically sat down on the grass with his broken bike, I know I couldn't fix what was broken – cancer; distress; faith. But I could help him cry, and, in those shared tears, I believe that healing was already happening.

"Sweet tears ... far too big for words", wrote Robert Pollock. But in our shared tears, can we find the beginning of healing, a healing that is far too big to begin to understand or explain?

### **A prayer for today**

*Christ, you wept for me. Let my tears of compassion be your tears for those in need. Amen*