10th August 2022

Alike

"Treat all men alike. Give them the same laws. Give them all an even chance to live and grow. All men were made by the same Great Spirit Chief. They are all brothers. The earth is the mother of all people, and all people should have equal rights upon it."

Chief Joseph, *Lincoln Hall Speech* (1879)

Bend it like Beckham is a 2002 UK film about two London women from different backgrounds who have a passion for football, but who have to deal with pressure from their families to conform to what is considered to be appropriate feminine behaviour. Watching the Women's Euros Tournament recently showed how we've come a long way since then!

The phrase, "Bend it like Beckham", came up recently for two other reasons. The first, while not exactly a case of "life imitating art", had elements of that in it, as I watched a *YouTube* clip of David Beckham's son, Romeo, score a spectacular free kick for *Inter Miami* against *Orlando City* – just as his father had done many times in his own football career. "Bend it like Beckham", indeed. The second arose in a recent family gathering where my son and I were together for the first time in a while. Seeing us standing next to each other, one of our daughters remarked to her brother: "Good grief, man! You're growing into your father!" We both took it as a complement! Whether it's Romeo Beckham having the same footballing skills as his father or my son becoming more like his dad, the familiar tagline of "like father, like son" came to mind. And it felt good!

But Chief Joseph, pleading for justice for the people of American's First Nation in Washington DC in 1879, went further. It's not just father and son who may be alike, but we are called to "treat all men alike". Of course, that's couched in the gender-specific language of the time, but in no way should this detract from Chief Joseph's powerful message. We operate under the same laws. We should be given the same chances. We're all under the same Great Spirit. The earth is our mother. All people should have equal rights on it. All people should be treated alike.

"Like father, like son" is but one expression of the greater universal affirmation – we are all created equal; we are *all* alike. And we don't need to be able to "Bend it like Beckham" to accept the truth of that.

A prayer for today

All alike? Only if we are alike in you. Amen

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