

4th October 2022

Infancy

**“Hey, little brand-new baby,
Your Mommy and your Daddy think you’re mighty nice.**

**Hey, little brand-new baby,
I hope you have a mighty nice life.”**

Tom Paxton, *Brand-new Baby*

If the 19th century writer, Jean Ingelow, is correct in valuing “the mature stages of life” as I quoted yesterday, she also points us to the wonder and joy of the fact that “there’s nothing so reasonable as infancy.”

On a rail journey into Edinburgh recently, a mother, father and baby boy boarded the train at the station after mine. The child was just old enough to sit up unsupported, so his father plonked him on the table and let him look around. He goo-ed and gurgled as he surveyed the carriage and its occupants. But mostly he grinned, and his smiling face lit up everything around. He caught my eye, and I smiled back. He grinned even more widely – if that was possible – and bounced on his bottom with excitement. *Clearly*, I was the best thing in the whole world. I loved it!

After a while, his gaze moved on, to the boiler-suited, daily-paper-racing-section-studying workman sitting opposite me. *This* man was now the most important thing in the world, and, pretty soon, a beaming child and a grumpy workman were engaged in an exchange of goos, ga-gas and expansive grins. Then it was the turn of an elderly lady at the next table. Next it was the ticket collector, then the passengers who were getting off at the next stop. The whole world of that train-carriage had been captivated, and changed, by “nothing so remarkable as infancy”.

As the train pulled into Edinburgh, I caught his mother’s eye and said, “Thank you. Your little one has made my day!” She offered a shrug and a quizzical frown and replied in a language I didn’t recognise. But it mattered not! We clearly understood each other. For her son had communicated with all of us in the universal language of an infant’s smile.

In the 60s Tom Paxton sang: “Hey, little brand-new baby, your Mommy and your Daddy think you’re mighty nice.” That was true for those proud parents. And I gave thanks to God that the world was a better place because an infant had chosen to smile at me on a train journey into town.

A prayer for today

An infant? An adult? But always a child of God. Thank you. Amen