

5th February 2024

Compliments

**"Current among [us],
Like coin, the tinsel clink of compliment."**

Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Princess* (1847)

Just as the usage of "coin" has lessened in recent times with the expansion of card-payments, especially the "contactless" kind, I wonder of "the tinsel clink of compliment" is heard less often than it should be?

Let's begin with how comfortable we are at receiving compliments. I'm still not good at it, though I'm getting better. I used two of my own hymns in a worship service recently, one appropriate to the theme, and the other for Communion. Both were sung with gusto and enthusiasm, which pleased me. A lady spoke with me afterwards. "I loved your new hymns," she said. Embarrassed, I smiled and replied, "Oh, it was nothing." "What?" she responded. "Nothing? Not at all! It was something, a *big* something. You should be proud of doing that." Right there, my diffidence at receiving a compliment was being challenged. What she was *really* looking for in response to her compliment was, "Thank you. I appreciate that," not in arrogance or self-importance, but in recognising the affirmation she was giving me as a reaction to the good I'd given her.

So, I invite you to ask yourself today: How good am I at receiving compliments, and if I'm not, how could I respond better when I hear their meaningful and affirmative "tinsel clink" from time to time?

Alongside that, how willing are we to *give* compliments? I'm not thinking here of compliments expected – and offered – after someone has done something new or performed extraordinarily well. I'm thinking more of those faithful and diligent folk who do ordinary things, perhaps for a while, who've become so much part of the furniture, that nobody bothers to offer them compliments anymore. Don't they still need an affirmation of a job well done? Aren't they worth more than being taken for granted?

So, here's my second invitation: How about noticing the folk around you who're getting on with doing what they've always done, and saying, "Well done, you," or "Thank you for what you do." *That* "tinsel clink" will be worth more than any amount of coinage that may come their way.

A prayer for today

*If "Well done, my good and faithful servant," is ever said to me,
might I say this more often to others when it's deserved? Amen*