

13th January 2025

Tears

**“Dear Lord, though I be changed to senseless clay,
And serve the Potter as he turn his wheel,
I thank Thee for the gracious gift of tears!”**

Thomas Bailey Aldrich, *“Two Moods”, Unguarded Gates and Other Poems*

How can the 19th/20th century American poet, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, thank God for “the gracious gift of tears”? And, yet he does.

Kahlil Gibran, writing in *The Prophet*, has a reflection which is headed “Joy and Sorrow” It contains these lines:

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked. And the self-same well from which your laughter comes rises oftentimes filled with your tears. The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.

*

When you are sorrowful, look again at your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping, for that which has been your delight.

I once visited a family to arrange a funeral for their elderly mother. I was to meet with two sons and two daughters. Arriving at the agreed time, I rang the doorbell. There was no reply. I rang again. And after a lengthy delay, a lady came to the door, told me she was the elder daughter, and invited me in. She was flushed, and her eyes were red. After she had composed herself, she offered me a cup of tea, and over the next few minutes, her sister and two brothers joined us – each of them, in turn, exhibiting signs of tearfulness in their reddened cheeks and puffy eyes.

Before any talk about the funeral, there were several embarrassed glances exchanged among the four siblings. The elder sister broke the ice. “Sorry we took so long to answer the door ...” Silence. “It’s just that we’d been reminiscing about mum, and I started to giggle ...” Silence. “And then we all joined in, till we were sore with laughing, tears running down our faces ...” Silence. “And then we saw you coming up the path, and we didn’t want to seem disrespectful, so we all disappeared upstairs to pull ourselves together ...” And one of the brothers added, “And I’ve just finished smashing my head into the pillow to get myself to stop ...”

Tears and laughter mixed up together. “Joy is your sorrow unmasked.” Gracious gifts to be thankful for, indeed ...

A prayer for today

Laughter and tears, reactions to life’s joys and sorrows, gifts of life from a living God.

An original reflection © Tom Gordon

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>