24th September 2026

Weeping

"Yet then from all my grief, O Lord,
Thy mercy set me free,
Whilst in the confidence of pray'r
My soul took hold on thee."

Joseph Addison, *Miscellaneous Poems*
'Divine Ode, made by a Gentleman on the conclusion of his travels'

Some years ago, I spent time with a widowed lady, helping her through the early stages of the death of her husband. A devout Christian, we talked a lot about faith, and it was good to hear that her trust in God had never shaken. "God is still God," she said. "But I'm not the 'me' I used to be. So I'm not sure God knows who I am. I weep so much, I can't pray. So God's not heard much from me recently." This came back to mind when I was reflecting yesterday on Kahlil Gibran's section on "Prayer" from *The Prophet,* and came across this – which I don't recall ever reading before:

> *And if you cannot weep when your soul summons you to prayer, she should spur you again and yet again, though weeping, until you shall come out laughing. When you pray, you rise to meet in the air those who are praying for you at that very hour, and whom, save in prayer, you may not meet.*

I wish I'd had those words when I worked with that lady. For here was the truth which she was reaching for, a truth to comfort her in her uncertainty and distress. Our weeping is our prayer. "Though weeping", we should still offer ourselves to God. That is enough of itself. Will we "come out laughing"? Well, maybe, or maybe not. But loved, accepted, understood? All of that. We are told that "Jesus wept." Was that not his heartfelt and honest prayer, with no other words needed – or possible?

And here's the other truth from Gibran's reflection – an aspect of prayer I've touched on before – "When you pray, you rise to meet in the air those who are praying for you at that very hour." You have no prayers? You have *their* prayers – for you, *and* in your place. You have their prayers, from folk you may never meet – and that has to be enough.

Might it be possible, if that sorrowing lady knew that God was still God, then God would already know who she had become and would be accepting of that? Joseph Addison surely had it right: "In the confidence of pray'r, my soul took hold on thee."

A prayer for today

Let my sorrow be my prayer, as well as my joy, my tears as well as my laughter.

An original reflection © Tom Gordon