

Psalm 138

Ballarat Cathedral, 9th June 2024

I don't know if you watch the Antiques Roadshow; Jill and I are keen followers. Just recently, they replayed a special episode held in France, to commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War. Among the various memorabilia that members of the public brought in were several letters written to their wives or sweethearts by men serving on various battlefields. The owner might introduce a letter ("from my grandfather to my grandmother, during the Battle of the Somme") and then read some snippets out loud, for example:

I love you more than the whole world. Thank you for all you have done for me. I cannot fully express what you mean to me, and the wonderful hope that we may one day be together again sustains me in these dreadful trenches.

I'm sure we've all come across such letters, on TV shows or in war museums or elsewhere. They are intensely, revealingly intimate, and we can't help feeling profoundly moved by such heart-rending personal communications.

We have just heard something quite similar. It is Psalm 138. The psalmist is overwhelmed by a desire to pour out his (or perhaps her) love to God, and to thank him for his goodness. Of course, the psalm is not exactly the same as those war letters, but there are many similarities, and we can learn from it as we are allowed into such a deeply personal communication between someone we never knew and

- This psalm is such an exchange, but it is intended for us to eavesdrop on, because the participants want us to know the truth about their relationship

³When I called, you answered me;
you greatly emboldened me.

The Lord is great above all things and people—

⁴May all the kings of the earth praise you, LORD,
when they hear what you have decreed.

⁵ May they sing of the ways of the LORD,
for the glory of the LORD is great.

Yet he sees and cares for the most humble, including the psalmist—

Though the LORD is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly;
though lofty, he sees them from afar.

⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve my life.

Notes on:

You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes;
with your right hand you save me. (v.7)

do not abandon the works of your hands. (v.8)