

Crowland Abbey

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PRIEST IN CHARGE

When I was a youngster, the chorus book *Sounds of Living Waters* was just published. This was a real game-changer, bringing a truly modern idiom into the church (Youth Praise was probably the first, but had dated quite quickly). One of the children's songs, which became much derided over the years, but was very popular with young children, was *If I were a butterfly*. You may remember it. Leaving aside its grammatically correct counterfactual conditional idiom construction (OK... I had to look that one up!), it is a very simple song.

It rattles through a whole bunch of animals, saying what we might give thanks for... If I were a butterfly, I'd thank you, Lord, for giving me wings... A whole menagerie followed, including *If I were a wriggly worm*, I'd thank you, Lord, that I could squirm. As it was usually accompanied by actions, it was a great favourite with young children (especially the crocodile – if you were lucky, you could 'bite' another child, and get away with it 'accidentally'!). Each verse ends with *But I just thank you, Father, for making me me!* Then continues into the chorus *For you gave me a heart, and you gave me a smile, you gave me Jesus and you made me your child, and I just thank you, Father, for making me me!*

At first the words seem somewhat banal, but, actually, what a profound truth they hide. How often do we look around with envy, or possibly more with a sense of inferiority? I wish I could be like [fill in your own hero/idol]... they're so [whatever]... I confess it's a failing of mine. How wonderful if we could truly make that line *I just thank you, Father, for making me me!* our own.

When asked what the greatest commandment was, Jesus replied "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind". This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt 22:37-40). The point being that you have to love (and accept) yourself too, as well as loving your neighbour. Perhaps, in order to be able to love your neighbour. Now, that's a thought to conjure with.

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