

30<sup>th</sup> July 2022

## Equal

**“All animals are equal.  
But some animals are more equal than others.”**

George Orwell, *Animal Farm*

During a recent family gathering, the women and men separated for a time into different activities, myself and the other males adjourning to the local park for a “kick-about”. While we were there, some local lads arrived and, finding that interlopers had taken over their pitch, offered to take us on at a game. So a scratch football match was soon in progress.

The trouble was, the two sides were unequal. Our side, the visitors, consisted of a seventy-two-year-old grampa, a forty-something dad with a dodgy knee, and two agile youngsters, one fourteen, the other ten. The home side was made up with an indeterminate number and ever-changing group of eight and nine-year-olds. Equal? Not by numbers, for the teams were very imbalanced. Equal? Not by age, the average age of our team vastly outdoing that of the kids’ side. Equal? Not by skill, for some of the youngsters were able to run rings around – and regularly outpace – this willing but out-of-form pensioner. No wonder the procession of local dog-walkers, joggers, Council workmen and mums with pushchairs who went past our pitch gave us some strange looks.

Equal? Not by any measurement ... At least, not by any *normal* measurement. But, you see, on that sunny afternoon it wasn’t “normal” measurements that mattered. It was the *immeasurable* that would be remembered by all the participants – the fun; the squeals of enjoyment; the appeals to the non-existent referee; the excitement when a goal was scored; the high-fives when the game was done.

Later in the evening, in our hotel, we bumped into one of the little lads we’d played against. He was with his family having a birthday meal just as we were with ours. We met his mum, dad, papa and others, and shared some stories about our spontaneous football match. At the end of our chat, the wee boy said to me, “Thanks for the game today, mister.” My heart sang. We’d been absolutely equal in our enjoyment. No imbalance of numbers, age or skill could have deprived us of that. Equal! “Thanks for the game, wee man,” I replied, as more high-fives were shared.

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, I thank you today that me and a little lad are under your loving smile. Amen*