

A Sermon for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Sunday 5th June 2022, Wareham Quay

By Canon Simon Everett

I wonder did you see the Jubilee Concert yesterday evening? Great wasn't it (although some acts were better than others). Well, I'm afraid we couldn't quite run to that sort of line up for Wareham and so you're stuck with me!

Never mind, the only person these celebrations are about is Queen Elizabeth II. As an unashamed Royalist, I have loved seeing all the bunting and flags going up in the town and around the country over the past month or so, as well as other patriotic displays in many places. Even after all that the monarchy has been through this past couple of years, when it comes to the queen the patriotic fervour is undiminished.

Repeatedly over the centuries, Royalty has proved to be central to our nation's spirit and everything that is distinctively British; in just the same way as the Christian faith is central to everything that our Queen holds as integral to a constitutional monarchy and to her long and glorious reign.

Leadership through service, supremely exemplified by Christ himself, has been the calling of Christian monarchy in this country since the earliest times. So much of the coronation service, its ceremony and symbolism, is designed to reflect this. It is designed to stir the heart of the nation, as it resonates with eternal images and principles God has set in each of our hearts. As Ian Bradley says in his book 'God Save the Queen', *'It is the coronation service more than any other institution or event that underlines the essentially spiritual and sacred nature of British monarchy. Packed with religious symbolism and imagery, it exudes mystery and magic, binds together church and state through the person of the monarch and clearly proclaims the derivation of all power and authority from God and the Christian basis on which government is exercised, justice administered, and state defended.'*

There are not too many who appreciate that our Queen, and all her predecessors, is the holder of a sacred office: anointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury she is consecrated - set apart in a godly way, for her work as reigning monarch. And it is widely acknowledged that the anointing, according to the Archbishop, brought her 'into the presence of the living God.'

For her this moment was the most solemn of her life. Lady Jane Rayne, one of the Queen's maids of honour, said of the anointing *'I think that moment is etched on my memory for ever... she looked so vulnerable, rather like a novice nun in a simple white shift.'* Another of the maids of honour was so overwhelmed by the moment that all she could do was to offer a prayer for the Queen, that *'her reign would be a long and happy one.'* Bishop Michael Mann the former Dean of Windsor said, *'She not only was anointed, she felt anointed. She saw herself as set aside for a particular service.'*

Very much like the Kings of the Old Testament, the Sovereign of this land is to submit to the Lordship of the Almighty God. And for our monarchs their example should be that of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; although we know only too well that some have managed this better than others!

However, from the age of ten* when she discovered, that in all probability, she would one day be Queen she seemed prepared to give her life in service to her country and commonwealth.

* In 1936 Edward VIII abdicated, meaning that the Queen's father George VI would become king and as he did not have a son Elizabeth was next in line.

For many years one of the symbols of service within the coronation ceremony has been a towel and bowl, symbolising service through the washing of feet - as mandated by Christ, when he washed the feet of the disciples at the last supper. Until comparatively recently, the monarch on Maundy Thursday has washed the feet of the poor as a powerful sign of what it is to minister leadership through service. Bishop Michael Marshall once wrote, "*A Christian understanding of monarchy, in a world intoxicated with the hideous perversions of political power and monstrous self-serving dictatorships, constitutes a truly civilising corrective. For Christ came to herald that 'yet more excellent way' which chooses to rule through service, - a distinctive hallmark of God's coming Kingdom.*"

The point of a constitutional monarch is that it places the position of head of state beyond political competition. And so in point of fact the Queen has very little actual power over the nation; this in theory resides in Parliament, although more especially with the government of the day. However, power should not be confused with influence - as the monarchy's power has decreased it seems their influence has increased, and often it is influence for the good. Once again Christ exemplifies that model. He had no power in earthly terms: no wealth, no army, no propaganda machines or spin doctors at his disposal. Yet in three years of ministry and service, Christ has had the greatest lasting influence upon our world and still has after 2,000 years.

In her first radio broadcast on her 21st birthday, she said, "*I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we belong. But I shall not have strength to carry out this resolution alone unless you join in it with me, as I now invite you to do: I know that your support will be unfailingly given. God help me to make good my vow, and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it.*"

Since then, through misfortunes, sorrows and many disappointments, our Queen has stayed true to that vow, the sentiments of which are more needed now than perhaps ever before in a society which claims rights before responsibilities and self-seeking opportunities from sacrificial service. So let us give thanks to God for the dedication of Her Majesty the Queen and pray earnestly for her in these glorious days of her Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

God save our Queen!