

SERMON – PENTECOST AND JUBILEE – 5 JUNE 2022 – Acts 2, Jn 14

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



As you may well know, at the beginning of her reign, there was a lot of debate as to whether the Coronation of Her Majesty The Queen should be televised. Apparently one MP worried “Might there, even, be something unseemly in the chance that a viewer could watch this solemn and significant Service with a cup of tea at his elbow?”, and the Archbishop of York worried that men might not remove their hats. No doubt some of you have memories of watching it – one of our St Eds ladies was telling me her dad, a Rolls Royce engineer, had built his own television set – the trouble was that she saw the coronation in green and white. I wonder her dad would make of the fact that I watched some of the St Paul’s service this time around on my mobile phone! The world moves on.



I had a look at a copy of the Coronation Order of Service, and it starts “1. The Preparation - In the morning upon the day of the Coronation early, care is to be taken that the Ampulla be filled with Oil for the anointing, and, together with the Spoon, be laid ready upon the Altar in the Abbey Church.”



So important, it comes first, and yet the anointing was the one part of the ceremony that was not broadcast. The most sacred part of the whole coronation, when Her Majesty was anointed with holy oil, following in the footsteps of Zadok the Priest and Nathan the prophet anointed Solomon King. The anointing represents the gift of the Holy Spirit, no it more than represents, it more than symbolises, it is a physical sign of that gift. That was seen as so special, so personal, that the rest of us mere mortals were not allowed to witness it.



Whenever I baptise a child, as part of the ceremony I anoint the child, I mark the child's forehead with the sign of the cross – I use holy oil, oil blessed by the bishop in her Cathedral on Maundy Thursday, symbolising our part in the wider church. I mark the forehead and use the words “Christ claims you for his own. Receive the sign of his cross. Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified.”

I then invite the parents and Godparents to sign their child with the sign of the cross, I always say that there are lots of words in the baptism service, here is an opportunity for a quiet symbolic action, time to pray and ask God's blessing.

“May almighty God deliver you from the powers of darkness, restore in you the image of his glory, and lead you in the light and obedience of Christ. Amen.”



I do believe that the Holy Spirit is with us in that action, there is a sense, perhaps not of the outpouring that we read about in Acts, but certainly a sense that God is there.

Her Majesty has often spoken about her Christian faith. In her Christmas broadcast of 2013 she said "For Christians, as for all people of faith, reflection, meditation and prayer help us to renew ourselves in God's love, as we strive daily to become better people. The Christmas message shows us that this love is for everyone. There is no one beyond its reach." The following year she affirmed "For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, whose birth we

celebrate today, is an inspiration and an anchor in my life. A role model of reconciliation and forgiveness, he stretched out his hands in love, acceptance and healing. Christ's example has taught me to seek to respect and value all people, of whatever faith or none."

Her faith, her journey with God, her knowledge of the Holy Spirit at work in her, that is what has underpinned her life and her reign – and for that we give thanks and praise.

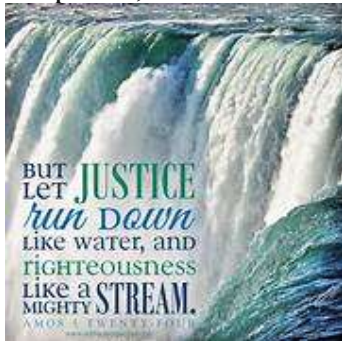


It cannot always have been easy, and that puts her on the same level as all other human beings – including those who gathered in the Upper Room. It is frightening how many of the men and women who were there in that Upper Room, men and women who received the gift of the Holy Spirit and went on to proclaim God's message and God's love, how many of those men and women paid with their lives for the good news they proclaimed. It is frightening how many Christians in our world today, pay a high price for their faith – those who are Christians in countries where faith is not allowed, in countries where our faith is not allowed. It is frightening how many pay a huge price for daring to stand against evil and proclaim the words of Paul to the Philippians, the words used at St Paul's on Friday, "Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable ... think about these things." There are many regimes who do not want that language to be heard.



There are churches in this country that have received a huge amount of abuse for challenging their neighbourhood – whether that be challenging racism, challenging immigration policies, challenging homophobia and so many other forms of hatred. Chatting to someone yesterday who was telling me how much work one of our Derby churches is doing for the Eritrean community, a marvellous welcoming work, but not entirely welcomed by the people who live nearby. Looking on facebook at the pictures of the LGBTQ+ chaplain for the Diocese of Oxford, there at Oxford's Gay Pride, loving, supporting, praying –

and some of the comments left were horrific. Always a challenge how much we join in the battle, and how much our role is to help the survivors find healing. I drove to Raynesway Tip first thing yesterday morning, with Classic FM playing loud Royal music on my journey. I like loud, Royal music, and was feeling quite patriotic. Then I stopped at the traffic lights at Pentagon island and there, just a couple of yards away from me, was a homeless man who had obviously slept in the shelter of the flyover. His presence, his plight, his poverty, took the shine off my Jubilee joy. The words of Amos came to mind – chapter 5, verses 21 to 24



- <sup>21</sup> I hate, I despise your festivals,  
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
- <sup>22</sup> Even though you offer me your burnt-offerings and grain-offerings, I will not accept them;  
and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals  
I will not look upon.
- <sup>23</sup> Take away from me the noise of your songs;  
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.
- <sup>24</sup> But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.



This Jubilee has been wonderful, I am so grateful to so many of you for so much hard work, and it is a privilege to celebrate it with you. I look forward to our service at 4 pm, and I hope the Lord will take some delight in it. But the challenge is there, as it always is, to build a better world, to fight for justice and truth, and to do God's will. In the power of his Holy Spirit, we will seek to do just that. To God be the praise and the glory. Amen.

Peter Barham, 4 June 2022