



On Friday 3 June the Archbishop delivered the sermon in St Paul's Cathedral during a service to mark and celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. This follows in full...

“Bring your supplications and thanksgivings to God” says St Paul. “Then the peace of God will guard your heart and mind, and keep on doing the things that you see in me.” (Philippians 4.6,7 & 9)

Of course, the “me” in that sentence is Paul himself. But Paul is only worth following because he is following Jesus. And Jesus is worth following because Jesus shows us who God is, and what our humanity could be. And there are many occasions in the gospels where we see Jesus himself, faithful to his vocation, seeking out places of replenishing so that he can learn God’s way.

“I only do what I see the Father doing”, says Jesus (see John 5. 19).

“He is close to God’s heart”, says St John (see John 1.18).¹

Sometimes I wonder whether the whole Christian faith is best understood as an invitation to dwell there ourselves.²

And the purpose of the Christian faith is to know and to do God’s will.

Sisters and brothers, dear friends, we gather today in great rejoicing to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen, but we do it against a backdrop of such suffering and uncertainty in our world.

For me, the best leaders - like Paul, like Jesus - are those who know how to be led. People who lead for others, not themselves. People whose heart’s desire is to serve the common good and build up the common life; who don’t try to do it all themselves, or act in their own strength alone; people who take a longer view; and who seek out places of replenishing, even places where they might learn the mind of Christ.

And I say this today, knowing that in Her Majesty the Queen we see an example of this kind of service; a staunch constancy and a steadfast consistency; a faithfulness to God, an obedience to a vocation that is the bedrock of her life.Â

No, bedrock isn't quite the right image.Â

Faith in Jesus Christ is a fountain, and it is a well.Â

It is the well from which we draw deeply and replenish ourselves through all the challenges, joys, and vicissitudes of life.Â

And it is a fountain, overflowing with immense joy. Joy, that we can live in the assurance that we are loved; joy, that God has a purpose for our lives; and, joy, that through Christ's dying and rising we have the promise of life eternal.

Now we all know that Her Majesty likes horse racing and I imagine Your Majesty will be watching this on the television. I don't have any great tips for the Derby tomorrow, but since the scriptures describe life as a race set before us, let me observe that your long reign reflects the distance of Aintree more than the sprints of Epsom. Certainly, less dressage than most people imagine. But with endurance, through times of change and challenge, joy and sorrow, you continue to offer yourself in the service of our country and the commonwealth. Â Your Majesty, we're sorry you're not with us this morning in person, but we are so glad you are still in the saddle. And we are all glad that there is still more to come.Â

So, thank you for staying the course. Thank you, for continuing to be faithful to the pledges you made 70 years ago. Thank you for showing us how service and faithfulness matter. People of all faiths and no faiths and people of goodwill can learn from this.

Sometimes people say to me that the Christian faith is just a prop. I couldn't agree more. I'm not ashamed to say I lean on Jesus Christ, that I'm trying to live close to his heart. Â That I need his wisdom and his hope. And if you will forgive such presumption, this is what I also see in Her Majesty the Queen.

And to the people of our great nation, on this great and historic day, I say this: we are indeed living in a time of uncertainty and challenge, and we would do well to consider where we will find the replenishing we need.Â

What I see in Her Majesty the Queen is someone who has been able to serve our nation faithfully because of her faith in Jesus Christ. Perhaps there is no better way of celebrating her Platinum Jubilee than by doing the same ourselves.

Stephen Cottrell

Archbishop of York

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