

# Sermon for Matins on the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Accession to the Throne of HM Queen Elizabeth II

Wisdom 6:1-21, Colossians 3: 1-22

*Mother Emma*

“Give ear, ye that rule the people, and glory in the multitude of nations. For power is given you of the Lord, and sovereignty from the Highest...”

Could a more apt Old Testament reading have been chosen by the Church of England, for this, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Accession to the Throne of Queen Elizabeth II, a monarch who has lived her life and served her God with a constant, visible and humble faith?

Six months before her Coronation, and aware that she was shortly to become Supreme Governor of the Church of England, The Queen asked the people of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth to pray:

*“...That God may give me wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve Him and you, all the days of my life.”*

Perhaps in her heart she heard the echo of God’s words in our reading from the Wisdom of Solomon, *“Unto you therefore, O kings, do I speak, that ye may learn wisdom.”*

We may remember from childhood Bible stories, that God offered King Solomon one gift when he became King, and he chose the gift of Wisdom, so that people came from far away to seek his judgment and wise decisions in their problems.

Rulers in our first reading are encouraged: *“For the very true beginning of wisdom is the desire of discipline; and the care of discipline is love; And love is the keeping of her laws; and the giving heed unto her laws is the assurance of incorruption; And incorruption maketh us near unto God. Therefore the desire of wisdom bringeth to a kingdom.”*

HM The Queen has been and continues to be held in huge admiration and respect for her wise and loving way of approaching people of all ages, backgrounds, nationalities and political persuasions, engaging with them primarily as fellow human beings and creatures of God.

She has lived out a life of discipline for herself and love for others, which has deeply influenced her reign. Her private interaction with other Heads of State, with a whole string of our own Prime Ministers, with many serving in positions of great power and responsibility all over the globe has been, it is thought, instrumental in helping them to reach decisions influenced by wisdom, compassion and restraint.

As Sir Peter Marshall, a member of our congregation, has reminded us, The Queen has been able, in her role of Head of the Commonwealth – to help that free association of independent member nations from across the world to act as a “force for good”, focused on people, rather than states, and seeking to bring about healing and reconciliation where needed.

Perhaps her customary calm, open and thoughtful approach to everyone she meets in her busy life reflects the teaching of our reading from the Epistle to the Colossians:

*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, ...mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another ... And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts; ... and be ye thankful.*

Such words offer us all a wonderful pattern for Christian living, reminding us of the values of our faith and of the life of Christ himself.

We know that the Queen privately prays daily and attends church weekly, but on those occasions when she speaks of her faith in public, it is clear that at its heart lie the teachings and example of Christ. Whilst respecting the many diverse faiths and beliefs of her subjects, we are privileged, once a year, to be given a glimpse of Her Majesty's deepest commitment to and reliance upon her Christian faith.

The Queen has always mentioned Jesus Christ, often as the climax of her Christmas Day broadcast, reminding us of his central position in her own life. In her 2008 Christmas broadcast, she declared:

*"I hope that, like me, you will be comforted by the example of Jesus of Nazareth, who, often in circumstances of great adversity, managed to live an outgoing, unselfish and sacrificial life... We can surely be grateful that, two thousand years after the birth of Jesus, so many of us are able to draw inspiration from his life and message, and to find in him a source of strength and courage."*

Like most of us, the Queen has experienced suffering, in her case through loss, the pain of relationship breakup within her own family, the destruction of a home she loved.

Just in the past year, she has lost her life-companion, the Duke of Edinburgh, and few of us can forget the image of her, seated alone in deference to the altruistic rules imposed upon all her people by Covid precautions, as he was laid to rest at St George's Chapel.

The Queen will observe today's anniversary in private, as it poignantly marks not only her Accession to the Throne, but the death of her much-loved father, George VI, and she will be conscious of those whom she has loved but sees no longer.

Yet in Christ she finds the strength and courage – and the hope – to place her trust in God and to walk with him into the future. How many of us can say we have such faith and hope? No doubt all of us are awe-struck that she has maintained this unshaken love for Christ for seventy years on the Throne and we can today give thanks for her example of love, humility, devotion and service.

The Bible passage to which the Queen most often returns in her reflections is that of the Good Samaritan. In 1975, she said:

*"[Christ's] simple message of love has been turning the world upside down ever since. He showed that what people are and what they do, does matter. and does make all the difference. The story of the Good Samaritan reminds us of our duty to our neighbour. We should try to follow Christ's clear instruction at the end of that story, "Go, and do thou likewise."*           **Amen**