

## **Vision for the Future. What do we want? 14 May 2023. Tidenham.**

I want to start with a bit of a rant... the ranting reverend!

As a community leader, as a priest and pastor, called to speak into this day and age... there is a particular spirit/attitude that we need to recognise... as the new King has been crowned.

More and more people wanting to be king and queen of their own life individual kingdoms with no accountability and responsibility to the wider community, country or wider world. We hear many voices saying they don't want God, they don't want Christian values, they don't want a king, they don't want the politicians, they don't want scrutiny or laws, they don't want to pay taxes, they don't want to work. For 'they' could we also say "I"?

What do people want? Something for nothing? People moan and complain and criticise (he says ironically) but are unwilling to 'be the change'. People are not minded to mix and muck in to their communities and volunteer but happy to complain.

Our institutions... law, health, education, politics, armed forces, the church are under strain and are rightly being questioned but also wrongly to the point where they are becoming unworkable.

Following the death of Queen Elizabeth II and the Coronation of our new King, Charles III we face enormous challenges: in our domestic, European and global politics, in technology, with the environment, in economics and with our values and beliefs and how we live together peacefully as human beings. All of which lead to some big questions. What kind of country do we want to be? What do we want to our nation to look like? What kind of country do we want to live in? What do we want?

This ranty view is of course not the whole story...

I was really encouraged by the events of last weekend. The sense of unity in diversity on show at the Coronation, the positive national identity on display, the promotion of loving service and recognition of those people who do live life for others as well as for themselves, the value of faith and specifically Christian faith and the joyous community gatherings and events that took place.

Just for a moment, certain protests aside, there was a coming together amongst the majority. The destructive voices of polarisation, division, dualism and complaint were quiet... or quietened... in favour of something positive, encouraging and hopeful.

Changes and challenges are not new to our generation. However, as we face massive challenges as a nation... cost of living, world instability, the environment etc... ... I think we're at a point, almost of power struggle, over which voices shape the future of our national life together.

Might the majority be able to come together under some kind of agreed consensus...?

God, King, country, community, valuing unity and diversity and the environment, loving service that looks beyond satisfying self... putting to one side individualism to address together all our challenges and changes we face today, for the common good?

OR... shall we just press what I think is a self-destruct button for nations, peoples, communities... doing what we want, when we want, where we want... each person doing what is right in their own eyes?

Personally, I would dearly love to see and hear some vision and advancement of the former rather than the latter!

The Christian faith provides vision for the future that we need... and the Coronation service at Westminster Abbey was full of that vision. The Coronation liturgy itself was a 'call to serve' for the King yes, but for the nation too.

After the pattern and example of Jesus Christ for leaders and all people to serve and not be served. For the King to be subject to the King of all Kings and reign with the same attitude... the same humility, compassion and love as Christ (Phil 2).

There was a dedication to respect those in authority and call to serve one another and work for the common good. For our laws, our leaders and our communities to pursue justice, mercy, freedom, gentleness and peace. There was a strong sense of interdependency... our need for one another to make our nation work.

In what is sometimes known as the manifesto of Jesus Christ, read out in Luke's Gospel (Ch 4), the poor, the broken-hearted, the blind and the bruised should be, or rather will be, liberated and set free.

This was expounded upon when the now infamous sword of offering was placed in the King's hand... *"WITH this sword do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the holy Church of God and all people of goodwill, help and defend widows and orphans, restore the things that are gone to decay, maintain the things that are restored, punish and reform what is amiss, and confirm what is in good order: that doing these things you may be glorious in all virtue; and so faithfully serve our Lord Jesus Christ in this life."*

There was a recognition of responsibility and accountability for all people and the need for us to humbly embrace a wisdom, guidance and instruction beyond ourselves. King Charles was handed the Holy Scriptures...

*"receive this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; this is the royal Law; these are the lively Oracles of God."*

The anointing recognised that King Charles cannot undertake his role and responsibilities in his own strength or on his own. There is a need for humble dependency on God and openness to God. Yet this not only goes for him. It goes for us too.

The Church and the Christian faith presents us with a vision of how we might live life together well as a nation, as communities and as individuals. The Coronation service gave us much of that. How long the church will retain such a prominent position in our national life to promote this...? I don't know. It depends what kind of country we want to live in. What kind of country people decide they want. It also depends on what we want... as we have a voice and power to influence for good.

For us as God's people, as the Church in this day and age, with whatever change and challenge presents itself, we can and need to pray pray pray, that light triumphs over darkness, that good overcomes evil and that love wins over apathy and indifference. We can, with God's help love the way of Christ... live our lives with integrity, responsibility and accountability... respecting those in authority, challenging injustice and fulfilling our call to love and serve the Lord and love one another... living our lives under God's reign for the good of our nation and one another.