

Pentecost 2022

Queen's Platinum Jubilee

This weekend we have been celebrating, and weather permitting many of us will continue to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee, 70 years of faithful service to God, our country, and the Commonwealth. We are truly blessed to have been ruled for so long by this amazing Christian woman!

But today is a double celebration because today the family of God around the world, remember and celebrate Pentecost, the time that the Holy Spirit came in power and filled the disciples who were waiting in Jerusalem, just as Jesus had told them to.

When the Queen was crowned 70 years ago by Archbishop Fisher, he gave her a bible with these words, "Our gracious Queen; to keep your majesty ever mindful of the law and the Gospel of God as the rule for the whole of life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with 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 Queen has often spoken of her faith. In her Christmas Message in 2002 she said this: "Each day is a new beginning, I know that the only way to live is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God." This I think is sound advice indeed, we would all do well every day to give our best in all that the day brings and to put our trust in God!

I think that it is clear that the Queen is seeking to be led by the Spirit of God. In our readings from Romans today Paul tells us that all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. Sin enslaves us and leaves us fearful, but the Spirit of God sets us free from sin and from fear. We have received a Spirit of adoption. This can also be translated as a Spirit of sonship – which includes

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daughtership. And if we are children of God then we are His heirs and joint heirs with Jesus. Now Paul never pulls his punches, he says we suffer with Christ so that we may also be glorified with Him. We have all known personal suffering in our lives, and we also suffer as Jesus does when we see what is happening in the world, when we witness the pain and suffering of so many in so many different ways. Jesus' example to us in the face of suffering, whether that of ours or of others, is one of prayer and patient trust in God. The answer to the question, where is God in suffering, is always that He is at the very heart of it, suffering with those in pain, weeping with those who mourn.

The good news is that we don't just suffer, we are also glorified with Jesus. God is our King, if we are His children and co-heirs with His Son, Jesus the Prince of Peace, then we also as sons and daughters of the King, are princes and princesses! And the Holy Spirit, the one poured out at Pentecost bears witness to the fact that we are sons and daughters of God, princes, and princesses in the Kingdom of Heaven. Now I know that we don't always feel like princes and princesses. I don't know if the Queen wakes up every morning and feels like a Queen, but however she is feeling, the undeniable fact is that she is the Queen of England. Just as however we are feeling, we are sons and daughters of the living God. So, every day, whether we feel like it or not, we will be wearing spiritual crowns. Some people find it helpful to imagine that, to imagine they are wearing a crown and that reminds them that they need to behave like a prince or a princess, a son or daughter of God. And as the Queen has shown us, that means to live a life of service to others. Being a prince or

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princess in the Kingdom of God is never about lording it over others, it is always about service and sacrifice!

We have received our adoption, our sonship by the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in each one of us. Now I know that I have said this before, but every single Christian has the Holy Spirit living in them. Anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God and chooses to repent of their sins and follow Him has the Holy Spirit in them. The disciples already had the Holy Spirit before Pentecost. In John 20:22, before the Ascension, it says that Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit". The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was to equip the disciples for what God wanted them to do, to publicly proclaim the Gospel, the Good news to everyone who was gathered in Jerusalem, to start the Church and to start spreading the Good news far and wide. The Holy Spirit always equips us for the things that God calls us to do. He has equipped the Queen, continues to equip the Queen for her life of service and He equips us too. He doesn't always come with a rushing wind and tongues of fire. John Wesley spoke of experiencing a strange warming of his heart and a trust in Christ, not a very dramatic beginning to a ministry that saw him preach all over the country and beyond and found what became the denomination of Methodism. Sometimes our awareness of the Holy Spirit may be no more than a gentle prompting in our spirit to do or not do something. We are all different and the Holy Spirit knows us and leads us, as we allow him to, in ways that we can relate to and respond to. Some people have very dramatic experiences, but even those won't happen more than a handful of times in anybody's life. Some people never have any kind of dramatic

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experience of the Holy Spirit. What is important is not the experiences that we have, or the feelings that we have. What is important is that we are willing to be led by the Holy Spirit, that we want to become more like Jesus, that we are faithful. We all make mistakes, but God has infinite patience with us. He will always forgive us as soon as we ask Him to. And as the Queen said, "Each day is a new beginning". Every day is a new chance to ask God, in the name of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to lead us and equip us to do our best with whatever that day brings and to always put our trust in God.