

The Servant Queen (1 Samuel 16:1,6-13, Mark 10:35-45) **ALL AGE**

Service revolving around 2 things: Oscar and Isabella's baptism, and thanks for the Queen. 2 celebrations in one (buy one get one free). There is a link between the 2 – anyone know what this is? (**SHOW CHRISM OIL**)

EXPLAIN USE in both baptism and coronation:

- Sign of cross (water here, but in Catholic tradition it's oil)
- Anointing at coronation – same oil **SHOW SLIDE OF PICTURE** – so sacred wasn't allowed to be televised (only this discreet picture before happened – note veil covering throne). Queen takes off all regalia (sign of humility, like bride giving herself to her people). Archbishop of Canterbury Geoffrey Fisher pours it onto her hands, her chest and her head.

Why do we anoint people – why Queen at coronation, why children at baptism? Two ideas (same for both)

ILLUSTRATION OF SMALL VALUABLE THING?

BLESSING – in OT anointing with oil a sign of blessing – so our first reading was story of David being anointed by Samuel. EXPAND

Same today: after making sign of cross I blessed Oscar and Isabella

Queen blessed too – fits verse applied to David: God looks at the heart, and Queen's heart is reason for her authority. She keeps her heart right before God and that's why she's been so blessed (and us too having her as Queen.)

Faith always central to her: (**SLIDE**) e.g. quote in 2002 'I know just how much I rely on my faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life 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!... I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel.'

Queen is by any measure a remarkable woman (borrowing from Servant Queen book):

- She's the longest reigning monarch in British history
- She never went to university, but she has been the adviser and confidante to 12 Prime Ministers
- She's a 90-year-old senior citizen but still works over 40 hours a week and rides a horse
- She employs 1200 people but feeds her own dogs

Hints at something else – other meaning of anointing:

Blessing, yes but also **SERVICE**

Queen's anointing in 1953 was to serve her country – that's why all status symbols taken away. Before God she was offering herself to her nation.

And she's always known this to be true: look at these two quotes:

(SLIDES) At start of adult life.... (aged 21)

'I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong. But I shall not have strength to carry out this resolution alone unless you join it with me, as I now invite you to do: I know that your support will be unfailingly given. God help me to make good my vow, and God bless all of you who are willing to share it.' (21st birthday radio address, 1947)

And end: (2012)

'This is the time of year when we remember that God sent his only son 'to serve, not to be served'. He restored love and service to the centre of our lives in the person of Jesus Christ.' Notice how the Queen quotes the very passage we read just now. In her address she then

goes on to quote 'In the Bleak Midwinter' – 'What I can I give him, give my heart.'

And lived this out: not just 40-hour week, relentless giving of herself. Lots of other ways:

- unusual respect – e.g. never late as sign of disrespect. Except once: stayed late to talk to Holocaust survivors – another sign of respect;
- never treats her staff as 'servants' and almost never calls them on their day off. *AB Welby quoted on TV this w/e: 'the gold standard'*

Why does she do this? As she said, she tries to follow Christ's example, the one who is greater than her, and yet who came not to be served but to serve. So if Jesus can do it, any of us can, even a Queen. Like the last line of that carol, she has given him her heart and tries to live in service of others, just as Jesus did.

Message from Archdeacon this week sums it up well: 'Her Majesty has set the bar very high. While most of us would be thinking about taking things easier at least by the age of 70, the Queen goes on to demonstrate the length, breadth, height and depth of service and self-giving. As we celebrate her 90 years this weekend, let us put those qualities at the heart of our own following of Christ.'

Which is my prayer too for Oscar and Isabella – when I made sign of cross it wasn't just for blessing, it was for service. (S?) 'Christ claims you for his own, receive the sign of his cross. Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, fight valiantly, remain faithful.'

In other words: as followers of Jesus we are called to a life of service, the sort of life that Jesus lived. That's the journey that Oscar and Isabella are now taking. That's the journey God calls all of us to take.

Today as we celebrate the Queen's official 90th birthday, and give thanks for her life and reign, let us also give thanks for God's blessing upon us. But let us also remember – as the Queen does – that this blessing is for service.

As the Queen follows the one who is greater than her, so should we.

And we can do that, Oscar and Isabella can do that, knowing that God is trustworthy – the One who calls us will walk with us. Finish with the poem that her Father George VI quoted in his Christmas message of 1939, as England feared for its future in the face of the oppressor, lovely words of Minnie Louise Haskins: (SLIDE)

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.”

And he replied:

“Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”

Amen.