

November 2023

The Kings speech

It was Robert Burns who said “O that gift that God would gie (give) us to see ourselves as others see us.”

Jesus said “Judge that you be not judged” But we do, all too often, and it is always easier to criticize others and not be aware of our own weaknesses.



It is useful from time to time to reflect on our values, individually, as the church and as a nation.

Two weeks ago, the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, King Charles gave a speech at the mansion house in London on the values and strengths we may draw on if we are to be the nation and society that we would aspire to be. I think these values he talked about are reflected in what Jesus preached and demonstrated in his life.

“I have taken the opportunity to reflect on what it is that makes this nation of ours so special. Is our society, with its deep and ancient roots - nurtured and enriched by our welcome of new citizens from the four corners of the globe since the dawn of our history - up to the challenges and ready to meet them, head on?”

“I believe so. Because at such a juncture in our national life, there are special strengths which we can summon to help us – deep wells on which we can draw,

“From these wells we can raise hope, shared purpose and, above all, a genuine togetherness that will see us through good times and bad. My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, the gifts these wells bestow are of high and enduring worth.

“First, there is the deep well of civility and tolerance. Do we pause, instinctively and unerringly, before speaking or acting to ensure we are affording equal weight to both sides of the balance? Our society would be a kinder and gentler place for it.

“This well carries the politeness and respect we owe to one another; this includes the practice of our religious faiths, in freedom and mutual understanding. One of my first acts as Sovereign, a little over a year ago, was to

open the doors of Buckingham Palace to the leaders of the major Faiths represented across these islands; to welcome them, with respect and indeed love, and to re-dedicate my life to protecting the space for Faith itself within our shores. Such understanding, both at home and overseas, is never more vital than at times of international turmoil and heart-breaking loss of life.”

The warmth and welcoming of strangers and explanation of the virtues of other nations is clearly demonstrated in Jesus’ meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well and his telling of parable of the good Samaritan. The inability for those of the Abrahamic faiths in Palestine and Israel today to draw on that virtue has caused death incredible pain and anger.

“There is the duty of care we feel for others in sickness or misfortune and, most powerfully of all, the stranger we have never met, but to whom we extend our hand and our help”

Jesus spent so much of his time healing the sick, the lepers, the blind, the paralysed the mentally deranged. We are fortunate to have a National Health Service which is not available in so many countries but personal interaction with those in distress is our duty as loving our neighbours as ourselves.

“Then, there is the cataract of science, innovation and scholarship which flows into our laboratories and libraries, our lecture halls and our seminar rooms the combatting and mitigation of global warming and climate change.”

Jesus told us to “love our neighbour as ourselves.” He also said “suffer the little children to come unto me.” Our children will suffer the effects of global warming and climate change if we do not use our skills, our wealth and our energies to leave a safe planet to our children and our children’s children.

“And then the cherished well from which the sound of laughter can be heard – the healing well filled with a sense of humour laced with an invigorating dash of self-irony. This well flows liberally into all the others.

“The instinct to co-operate wherever and whenever possible is deep within us. Even in the most fractious times – when disagreements are polished, paraded and asserted – there is in our land a kind of muscle-memory that it does not have to be like this; that the temptation to turn ourselves into a shouting or recriminatory society must be resisted, or at least heavily mitigated whenever

possible, especially in the digital sphere where civilised debate too often gives way to rancour and acrimony.

“These instincts come together in perhaps the deepest of all our reservoirs – the one that irrigates our crucial sense of responsibility, both individual and collective – that enables us to fulfil our duties as good citizens who understand, without having to write down or formalise them, the decencies on which our institutions and our constitution depend, as well as our relationships, one to another.”

King Charles finished his speech by saying:

“My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, these are virtues for all seasons.”

They are the virtues of his and our Lord and King Jesus Christ may we practise them.

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