

## Kings and Queens

10 6 12

God of time and eternity,  
whose Son reigns as servant not master;  
we give you thanks and praise  
that you have blessed this Nation, the Realms and Territories  
with ELIZABETH, our beloved and glorious Queen.  
In this year of Jubilee,  
grant her your gifts of love and joy and peace  
as she continues in faithful obedience to you, her Lord and God,  
and in devoted service to her lands and peoples,  
and those of the Commonwealth,  
now and all the days of her life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen.

Today, our text is taken from the First Book of Samuel, chapter 8 and verse 6:

**'Give us a king to govern us'**

One of the many features that characterise us as human beings is our ability as individuals to live together in community. If we are to be a thriving vibrant community, then there needs to be a right order of things and there needs to be a system by which how we behave is regulated and governed. From our history and from our contemporary news media, we have too many examples of where

societies are destroyed by a failure of good governance. It should come as no surprise, therefore, when the Children of Israel demand of Samuel, the High Priest that he should select for them a suitable man to be king over them so that they may be, like the nations around them, effectively governed. Samuel is less than pleased because to him Israel is a theocracy with God as their king. But the people want a king and God tells Samuel to give the people what they want. The result – Saul is chosen king and sadly Saul ultimately proves not to have been a good king but his successor, David, was excellent and his successor, Solomon, was fabulous, though Solomon's son, Rehoboam, sadly proved to be inept.

This year, and last week in particular in the United Kingdom, there were celebrations to mark the Diamond Jubilee of her majesty Queen Elizabeth II. A reign of sixty years is remarkable, exceptional and many appreciate having a Queen as the ultimate ruler of the country. The institution of monarchy is one that has evolved and changed overtime and the House of Windsor is the most recent successors to a throne that can trace an almost unbroken line back to the reign of William the Conqueror and possibly even to his Anglo-Saxon predecessors.

Queen Elizabeth is a constitutional monarch, a figurehead on behalf of whom her democratically elected government exercise executive power while our Queen remains a symbol of right order in whose name we, her subjects, are governed. Of course, not everyone likes the institution, the ceremonial, the system of recognition of merit; some would prefer a republic, to abolish the monarchy and replace this link with our past with a wholly democratic system of government.

Whatever your view, the fact is monarchy in the United Kingdom has evolved over the centuries and what we have now would be as foreign to Charles I's understanding of the divine right of kings as it would be to William the Conqueror's notion of the feudal system. What we have is a peculiarly Christian notion of service, that our leader, the Queen, is there to serve her people. By what she says and what she does, she is there for us and though there are many real benefits for her in being in office, the cost to her of being in office is not inconsiderable.

What we have in Queen Elizabeth is someone who embodies the Christian ideal of service. She is there for the good of her people and in rapidly changing times, she represents stability. Last year on Maundy Thursday at Westminster Abbey, Julian Thompson, our Church Warden emeritus, was fortunate enough to be selected as one of the people to receive the Royal Maundy money. The ancient ceremony is a reworking of the example of Jesus' washing the feet of his disciples before the Last Supper – in caring for their bodily needs, the one through washing their feet, the other by providing money, the image is one of the leader leading by serving the people. The sixty year reign of her majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, has been one sustained example of such service.

My text this morning was 'Give us a king to govern us' and in being given Elizabeth II, I believe that we can feel truly fortunate.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's, Dinard*

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H: Sermon 26 : Kings and Queens

