Easter 5 2023 Sermon Notes – Rev. Jonathan Pinkney

It has been 70 years, since there has been a coronation and so it has been so long since we have had this conversation about what it looks like to crown a monarch.

And we sit less than two weeks after another discovery of unmarked graves at a residential school site here in BC and one day after the commemoration of red dress day to remember the murdered and missing indigenous women here in Canada, a lavish celebration of enthroning a king is understandably to many people here a hard thing to get excited about.

Our relevance through a closeness of friendship and solidarity through commonwealth and our distance of miles and the legacy of complication through colonial scars make this a complicated event.

These days there is no official ‘Church’ in Canada, and the role of Monarch as head of the Anglican Church in Canada changed many years ago.

And now with the title of ‘defender of the faith’ removed from the official title of the King here in Canada, essentially we have permission to ignore this event if we wish.

And I know through speaking with colleagues from around the Diocese this week, that there are Churches that will have no reference to the Coronation this morning.

We will have as part of our service this morning, the collect for the King, written by the Anglican Church of Canada, and we will sing God save the King. Please know, if that is something that you feel uncomfortable with, you are welcome to yourself ignore that should you wish.

So I do feel conflicted about talking about it this morning, but the thing is, is that if I’m wrestling about speaking about something, I know that it’s often the right thing to do because I that if I’m thinking about these things that happen in our world, then there’s a good chance that other people are too, and I never want to shy away from the difficult conversations.

Now part of the reason that I feel conflicted about talking about it this morning is because I am British, and I moved to Canada at a time where traditions and history in Canada are being considered and there is a difference in opinion.

Perhaps more so here on the west coast, perhaps more so with the younger generation, but to ignore the fact that a lot of people struggle with a colonial legacy would be naïve.

And so honestly, that’s why I want to talk about it this morning.

So whilst acknowledging my place, and also naming that I have my own framework for how I see the world, I want to explore some of the themes of what this looks like in the world today and also for what this looks like in the Church.

If you watched the coronation service yesterday you will have noticed that this act of instituting power and authority upon a leader was an Anglican worship service.

Front to back, it looked a lot like everything that we do in Church every week.

If you think about it, it may have been the most high-profile Anglican worship service that there has ever been.

So it is probably worth talking about for that alone.

Regardless of what we may think of Charles or Camila, regardless of who or when, the Coronation of a King with the pageantry and regalia raises important questions about what we believe.

It undoubtably raises questions of wealth, of difference, of separation and rule.

Some of us may be excited about seeing historic items of great value, some of us may sense injustice about stolen gems adorned on a man and woman with inherited title.

Other questions it raises are the value that we place on outwards expressions of tradition that are storytelling through performance and skill. We may see the great value of art and music, we may question the presence of the military in public life.

All these things run through our head as we look around at the structures of our world and see the great injustice of wealth and poverty.

It is easy to get lost in identifying who owns what, and there is a great irony in having the lavishness of gold and crowns upon a king, and a prime minister whose personal wealth more than doubly eclipses that of the man he read scripture to.

And yet there is beauty in a man of Hindu background, reading Christian scripture to a Christian King.

I think we just have to name how upside down and complicated everything is. And so the search for meaning becomes something that can so easily be dismissed. But of course while many can see no beauty in a celebration of inherited status, others see great beauty in the layers of meaning through traditions.

And I want to speak on some of the meaning behind the liturgy of the service.

This is something that I admire Charles for, it may be his most endearing quality for me, is how he sees the importance of Church liturgy.

The ecumenical and interfaith symbolism spread throughout the service were detailed with an intention of unity by someone who wishes to affirm the faith of all.

The symbolic acts like being greeted first by interfaith leaders, a bible with acknowledged handwritten errors, handed to him by the moderator of the Church of Scotland.

Small acts of transforming what spiritual faith means in a traditional Anglican service.

And at its heart a coronation place in a Eucharist service where we would celebrate baptism, or confirmation, or ordination.

And that’s what struck me as yesterday as we confirmed Shannon and Maxwell from St. Christopher’s as well as 30 others at the Cathedral downtown yesterday.

And through that service I was thinking about how similar some of the presentation of authority was, of meeting Christ through the laying on of hands as a figurehead sits in a chair that we ordain authority to.

As I put on decorated robes and stand behind a decorated altar that represents Christ in our space, you simply can’t ignore statements about authority and power in our Church.

When we ask ourselves questions about our relevance, when people outside observe how we conduct ourselves in our space through our decoration, these are the things that are present and real for people in either finding faith, or struggling to connect with a worship of God through human activity.

That is part of our presentation and our legacy in our Church. We present separation and structures of authority to convey a theology of how God imparts wisdom and order into our world.

And if we encounter a personality that we dislike, or if we experience harm or rejection from structures of power and authority, we become disengaged or disenfranchised with it, if we were even connected to it at all.

And this is the great challenge of our Church in the world today. When damage has been caused and our relevance is questioned, we have to find resources and explain our meaning in ways that do inspire faith and do transcend God’s purpose.

Those who make change in the Church love tradition. Reform happens because people feel so passionately that the heart of the thing that they love has lost its authenticity.

And we today sit amongst human activity seeking divine truth.

And that is the thing is actually at the heart of what took place yesterday.

A message told through liturgy that human Kingship is service. God is King and Lord of Lords, and that no matter who we are or where we go, our accountability to the one who created us is amplified to those who are given authority.

That is how we need to see the world. The cornerstone on which our Church is built is the stone that the builders rejected. The heart of the Kingdom of God is precious and chosen for purpose by a God who sees beyond what we see as our limitations and place.

Jesus taught us that all of the structures of power and authority are turned upside down by a King who came in love and service. To be with the poor and stand amongst the persecuted and rejected.

A King that did took off his robes of power and wore a crown of thorns upon the cross.

And the place that is prepared for us as Jesus says in my Father’s house, is a place of many rooms prepared for us that we are not alone. That we are united with God in our place beside the divine that we are shown through the solidarity of God as Jesus with us.