

Choral Evensong

Last week we cared for two of our granddaughters, four and eleven and a half. They were playing in the cubby and I heard the oldest say, 'I'll be the princess and you be the fairy.'

When preparing this reflection on the Diamond Jubilee, I remembered that years and years ago, I wanted to be a princess. I was about ten, with two bossy older sisters and a younger brother, the light of my mother's life – so, yes, I was a typical mixed up middle child.

I decided that God had made a big mistake and I was really a princess and should be living, not in East St. Kilda but at Buckingham Palace. Later, my school went to the MCG to see the young Princess Alexandra and she went around the oval in a big car and we all cheered and waved flags. I can't remember why, but it was important enough for us to miss half a day of school. Yep, that should have been, could have been, me. Maybe you have had delusions of grandeur at some time in your life.

Well, years past, some maturity arrived; East St. Kilda had not become Buckingham Palace and the hopeful princess grew up and became a very happy primary school teacher. Looking back, I realise that my understanding of my place in the world was a bit skewed by the family problems we were having at the time; as they were worked out, so my self-esteem grew and I became a person in my own right with the knowledge that God's wisdom had guided me from escapist dreaming to positive reality.

Our readings tonight speak of David's misuse of power to achieve his dreams, the psalm speaks of the wonder of mighty deeds done in thanks to God, and we hear of Paul's acknowledgement of his servant-hood despite his claim to be the very least of all the saints.

It is indeed amazing that God would take a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee, and a persecutor of the church to be the main minister of the mystery, the mystery of the work of the gospel in bringing Jew and Gentile together into one new body. However, it seems that God used Paul to declare specifically how Jews and Gentiles would be joined together in one Body of Christ. This was something hinted at through others, but only specifically detailed through Paul's revelation. Paul trusted that his readers would understand what God revealed to him.

Through God's loving wisdom, all matters will be resolved eventually. We pray for this in the midst of the world's troubles and give thanks for the instances of stability we enjoy. One of those stabilities in our lives has been the long reign of Queen Elizabeth and our service tonight reflects our appreciation for her dedication and application to the task given to her by birth and circumstance.

The Queen states that her faith is one of the most important issues in her life. Through some very difficult events, her Christian faith has obviously upheld her and given meaning when all

around her was in danger of falling apart. She has dealt with issues in her own way, using her particular power and her unique position in the world.

There is no one quite like Queen Elizabeth. During the recent celebrations, it was acknowledged that even people who hold republican views recognise that she is to be admired for her unflagging determination to uphold the traditions of the monarchy. There is no doubt that she is “special,” a word overused these days to usually describe outstanding people in the public eye.

Being “special” is our description also *for you and for me*, for since the beginning of time, there has never been another person like you. Nobody has your smile, your eyes, your hands, your hair. Nobody owns your handwriting, your fingerprints, your voice. You are special. You are unique.

And God loves you the way you were, the way you are and the way you will be.

We don’t need to be princes and princesses, Kings and Queens, to be special in God’s eyes. We don’t have to wield destructive power as David did to achieve our ambitions to be loved, nor can we expect that psalms will be written extolling our works in God’s name. But in God’s grace and good time and using the abilities given to us, our place in the world, wherever that is, will be a better place because we have been there.

So the need for us to imitate anyone else is absolutely wrong. We are special, each in our own way, we are rare and in all rarity there is enormous value.

It is no accident that we are who we are and what we are. No mistakes were made by God. God made you and I for a special purpose—he has a job for each of us to do that nobody else can do as well as you or I. Out of billions of applicants only one is qualified for that job. Only one has the unique and right combination of what it takes and that one is you.

We have before us the example of Paul, who was perfectly qualified for his unique God given task. No one else could have “been” Paul. He teaches, exhorts, reminds, lectures and loves as the reading tonight demonstrates. As one theologian writes: ‘Paul tells his readers not to lose heart because he is in prison but to realise that his present sufferings were their glory. No tribulation was going to stop his message about Jesus.’ Paul didn’t waste time or energy on worrying about the future, and the results of his work show that he was open to the will of God and probably in a greater way than he ever imagined. This Roman imprisonment produced the letters of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon. They all certainly have a place in God’s eternal plan. In the same manner, each of us has a place in the service of God’s eternal plan. Knowing this and working towards it is a great guard against losing heart in the midst of tribulation.

So tonight we give thanks to God that, despite what we might imagine, we are in the right place at the right time in our lives.

We give thanks for the challenges past, present and future, for the joy of our faith community, for the hard-won peace that dwells in our hearts and this night, for Queen Elizabeth the Second, defender of the faith.

God save the Queen. Amen

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