

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023; Benefice Holy Communion, Oswaldkirk. The Celebration of the Coronation of King Charles III

I wondered yesterday as I watched the service just what the King would be thinking as he accepted his responsibility and was crowned and anointed. Did he think to himself, “I am the latest in a long line of monarchs in England dating back to William the Conqueror in 1066 who has been here.” I wonder if he reflected and asked himself, “What is this all about?”

I thought therefore today to reflect on that question too. During the Coronation, the Sovereign is anointed on their head, hands and heart, to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide them as they lead. For the Coronation of King Charles III, the oil was made using olives from groves on the Mount of Olives, consecrated in The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem by the city’s Anglican Archbishop and the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem. Therefore, the anointing is one of the holiest parts of the Coronation Service and is not seen by TV audiences or the congregation in the Abbey. A newly commissioned screen surrounds the chair on three sides for this part of the service. The Archbishop of Canterbury dips his fingers in the Coronation Spoon, the most ancient item of Coronation regalia, before anointing the monarch. The anointing then, is the most sacred part of the coronation rite - even more than the placing of the crown upon the new Monarch’s head.

The practise of anointing is truly ancient, going back to the early Hebrews in the Old Testament. Kings, priests, and prophets were anointed outwardly with oil to symbolize a more profound spiritual reality, that God’s presence was with them, and His favour was upon them. While David was still a young shepherd, God told Samuel to anoint him to become king over Israel. From that day forward, the Spirit of the Lord rested powerfully upon David’s life.

There are three Hebrew words in the Old Testament which have been variously translated into the English word “anoint” or “Anointed” and all are very close in sounding to the word that means Messiah. In Greek for the “anointed one” the word is pronounced Christos meaning ‘covered in oil or anointed.’ It is from this word that the name and title for our Lord Christ can be attributed. The Greek the word “Christ” and the Hebrew word Messiah both mean “the anointed”. Anointing was a sign of the coming of the Redeemer. That is the coming of our Lord and Messiah, Jesus Christ our Lord. At his baptism, we are told, the Holy Spirit came and rested upon Jesus to equip him for the future God had for him. In the New Testament, anointing with oil and baptism became the means by which all believers were blessed by and received the Holy Spirit.

On specific occasions in our Church, we continue to use oil to anoint; at baptism, confirmation, ordination, and to minister to the sick and dying. It is an outward action and ritual to bring an inward grace and peace from the Holy Spirit. In my work as a hospital chaplain, I often anointed the sick or the dying and frequently it had an effect, bringing peace and comfort. It was interesting hearing the interview with the two bishops after the service yesterday when one of them referred to the moment when King Charles was anointed as when ‘something happened.’

I too feel that certainly something happens during an anointing because anointing with oil also conveys the sense in which all Christians are transformed by the Holy Spirit. John in his first letter says that through Jesus Christ, believers receive “an anointing from the Holy One”.

So, what does it mean to be anointed by Christ, the Holy One? I take it to mean that Jesus has poured out on every Christian something of his own anointing from the Father and the most complete thing we can say about Jesus’s own anointing is that he was anointed by God the Father with the Holy Spirit. “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.” So it is for

every believer who comes into contact with Jesus and is touched by the Spirit. The effect, according to John is that we know: “You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.” The knowing is the result of the anointing. It’s like the anointing of the man born blind in [John 9:11](#) (he saw!) and the anointing salve in [Revelation 3:18](#), where Jesus anoints their eyes and they see spiritual reality. .” You know that “Jesus is the Christ.” The anointing from Jesus, God’s Holy One, keeps you from believing the lie that Jesus is not God’s Anointed One. It means’ to perceive with certainty; to understand clearly; to have a clear and certain perception of truth, fact, or anything that actually exists. The significant thing about this kind of knowing is that it comes from not ourselves but from God’s Holy Spirit. It is a gift of love.

Anointing brings a coming together of the people in Christ; connecting us with all believers, and by his anointing yesterday we are connected with our King Charles in community and service, as shown by all those thousands of people lining the Mall and outside the palace.

By his anointing and by ours we are all connected to and have allegiance to Jesus Christ and so let us pray this week with joy and thankfulness, that we will know God will cause his truth and his anointing – his word and his Spirit – to abide in our churches and communities and in all our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.