



One of the hymns picked for today, which we will sing together shortly, was “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty.” Now, maybe this is rather weird on my part, but every once in a while, I find it interesting to do an internet search and see when a certain song was used in a famous service over the decades’ past. And you need not look far for this particular hymn, just over eight years ago, in fact: June 4, 2013. It may not seem like an important date, but for a nation on the other side of the pond from us, it was a celebration marking a truly momentous occasion from sixty years before.

Because, back in 1952, there was a death in a rather famous family, and it would completely alter the life of a 27-year-old girl. Elizabeth Alexandra Mary became forever known as Queen Elizabeth II. A year later, the official coronation took place in Westminster Abbey in London, England. Nearly 70 years later, at 95 years of age, the Queen remains the face of Britain. And come to think of it, we, on this side of the Atlantic, have a rather complicated history with that royal family. We hated the Queen’s third great-grandfather in George III. We absolutely despised him and everything he stood for about 250 years ago. Now, Americans are absolutely infatuated with the Queen, years ago with Princess Diana, and now with Harry and Meghan. We cannot get enough of them with bingeing Netflix series, glued to documentaries, reading through all the best-selling books, and staying up through the wee hours of the morning to be mesmerized by royal weddings.

I’m sure not as many people watched the Queen’s 60th anniversary of her coronation back in 2013. Nevertheless, the service began with the Dean of Westminster referring back to the actual coronation when oil was placed on Queen Elizabeth II to signify she was tangibly blessed by the Divine in her service to the country. People may think that oil must have been so holy, so out-of-this-world special to be used on Her Majesty. However, it really is no different than the oil we use for any baptism on this side of the pond or anywhere else in the world, for that matter. It is no less special, whether it’s used for welcoming a child into a community of faith or for Confirmation or with services of healing. After all, it isn’t so much about the oil. It’s about the same God present throughout. It’s the same God who loves someone with absolutely no title whatsoever, as much as the one who sits on a royal throne.

So, as the worship concluded for the 60th anniversary of the coronation at Westminster Abbey, the assembly was invited to stand to sing, “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,” including the third verse:

*Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend you;
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend you.
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do
if with his love he befriend you.*

It so happens God made a pivotal decision long ago, long before there was a British Empire or an America. God decided to befriend the entire world through Jesus Christ. God also decided that we did not have to reach a certain royal position or any level of notoriety whatsoever to earn that transformational love.

And sometimes, it takes the gift of music to “ponder anew what the Almighty [not only] can do,” but has already done for all of us. The reading from James asks, “Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise.” Granted, children of God are not always cheerful when they enter a sanctuary, whether it be in Westminster Abbey or anywhere else, and so we ponder how this God absolutely adores us no matter what emotions or thoughts or feelings we bring in that day. That isn’t anything new. That’s what God has been doing since the beginning. And the gift of music continues to inspire us to realize just how mind-boggling this God is, whose love for us never ends, as if the music of heaven itself never ceases from playing not in some far-off distance, but in the very depths of our heart. So, yes, we will join with our siblings in Christ throughout the world this day and always, in praising the Lord, the Almighty, who for some reason loves a child of God with no title at all as much as a queen and anyone else throughout the world. And for the gift of music that compels us to always ponder what this God has done and is doing for us with amazing grace, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!