

**Sunday 3rd June 2018. 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Queen's Coronation.**

St Matthew 7:25      *but it did not fall, because its foundations were on rock.*

The text is not from this service at all, but from today's family service at 10am when little Harry Abram was baptised into the wider family of the Church. It's from the last part of the Sermon on the Mount, the familiar passage about the two builders who built their houses one on rock and one on sand and the rains fell and the winds blew and you remember well enough how it goes without having to hear it read out at all. It's a passage that I sometimes choose for baptisms, where we look to lay a firm foundation for the new life that the family gathers here to celebrate, a firm foundation not of granite rock but of Christian faith.

*Christ is made the sure foundation,  
Christ the rock and cornerstone.*

It's also a reading that I often choose to read and reflect on at wedding services in St Margaret's Chapel in Edinburgh Castle. The Sermon on the Mount seems to suit the lofty position of the chapel overlooking the city and commanding a view that stretches on a clear day to the hills of the north. And the chapel itself, the oldest building in Edinburgh, has withstood more than its fair share of storms – of weather and of war – through the nine centuries or so of its existence perched on the upper edge of the castle rock. Altogether it forms I like to think rather a good metaphor for marriage, built on a firm foundation. *but it did not fall, because its foundations were on rock.*

And if it works for baptisms and weddings then this morning, when the baptismal baby was so helpfully called Harry, I would venture to suggest it works just as well for monarchy and in particular for the monarch whose sixty six years and more on the throne are reflected in the sixty fifth anniversary of Her Majesty's Coronation this weekend. The solemn vows that The Queen made at her coronation on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1953 (by all accounts a cold, wet day some 16 months after her father's death at Sandringham in early February 1952) came hours after the news broke that a couple of climbers from a Commonwealth expedition had got to the top of the highest mountain in the world – "All this and Everest too" proclaimed the headlines of the Daily Express the next day. And I have no doubt that the following Sunday the lectionary was cast aside and the Sermon on the Mount proclaimed from lecterns and pulpits across the land. Now, 65 years since her coronation and 66 years since her accession to the throne, it is a rare and distinctive peak that The Queen herself has reached. And one to which the Sermon on the Mount still speaks its timeless words of wisdom. "Whoever hears these words of mine", said Jesus, "and acts on them is like a man who had the sense to build his house on rock. The rain came down, the winds blew and beat upon that house; *but it did not fall, because its foundations were on rock.* The House of Windsor has surely been blessed to have The Queen as its own head and cornerstone these last sixty five years, helping it to withstand all the storms that from time to time have inevitably arisen. But its foundation and hers have been built on a rock of faith. At her first Christmas broadcast live from Sandringham in 1952, The Queen looked ahead to her coronation and asked people "to pray that God may give me wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve Him and you, all the days of my life". And looking back today can we not honestly say that every day of her life she has demonstrated a capacity not just to hear the words of Jesus but to act on them and to follow his supreme example of service and sacrifice? *but it did not fall, because its foundations were on rock.*

For The Queen those foundations were laid not just at her Coronation but also at her own Christening almost exactly 27 years before, on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1926. Whilst television footage of the coronation shows her to be calm and serene throughout the proceedings in Westminster Abbey, by all accounts she cried through the whole christening service in the chapel at Buckingham Palace. But nonetheless the foundations were laid. Foundations of faith and hope and love; foundations of duty and service and sacrifice. Foundations that would help her cope with her father's death at such an early age, and her own succession at a much earlier age when she might so easily have hoped for a few more years before the weight of the Crown and the extraordinary responsibility that came with it was set on her young head and shoulders. Out of the darkness of King George VI's death, came the opportunity for her own light to shine. Well, not her own light entirely. As St Paul puts it in his second letter to the Church in Corinth, *It is the God who said "Let light shine out of darkness", who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

*See! From his head, his hands, his feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

The Crown of St Edward the Confessor that was gently but firmly placed on The Queen's head in Westminster Abbey 65 years ago yesterday has been used in coronations since the 13<sup>th</sup> century and is composed of rich jewels and pure gold but at its point, at its apex is the cross of Jesus. And it is in the light of his crown, his crown of thorns, that The Queen has ruled and reigned these last six and a half decades, and continues so to do. As we mark another pinnacle of her rule and reign, the 65<sup>th</sup> - the blue sapphire - anniversary of the Coronation, and give thanks for her enduring sense of dedication and devotion to duty, we give thanks too for the example she sets her people of a life built on a firm foundation of faith. *it did not fall, because its foundations were on rock.*

*Christ is made the sure foundation,  
Christ the head and corner-stone,  
Chosen of the Lord and precious,  
Binding all the Church in one,  
Holy Zion's help for ever,  
And her confidence alone.*

And now may God bless to us this preaching of his most holy word, and to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be all praise and glory now and forever. Amen.