

Order of Service 6th February 2022

Marking the beginning of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee year

A Resolute Life

Welcome

Hello and welcome to Hearsall at Home for 6th February 2022. Today we give thanks for our Queen at the start of her Platinum Jubilee year; and, inspired by Her Majesty, we reflect on the theme of living a resolute life.

Call to Worship

Jesus said, 'No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.'

Luke 9:62

Let's turn our attention to Jesus' call, and *Make Way* for him in our lives.

Song (WT 289) **Make Way**

Make way, make way,
For Christ the King
In splendour arrives.
Fling wide the gates and welcome Him
Into your lives.

Chorus

Make way! (Make way!)
Make way! (Make way!)
For the King of kings,
(For the King of kings)
Make way! (Make way!)
Make way! (Make way!)
And let His kingdom in.

He comes the broken hearts to heal,
The prisoners to free.
The deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance,
The blind shall see.

Chorus

Make way! (Make way!)
Make way! (Make way!)
For the King of kings,
(For the King of kings)
Make way! (Make way!)
Make way! (Make way!)
And let His kingdom in.

And those who mourn with heavy hearts,
Who weep and sigh,
With laughter, joy and royal crown
He'll beautify.

Chorus

We call you now to worship Him
As Lord of all,
To have no gods before Him;
Their thrones must fall!

Chorus

Prayer of Adoration

Heavenly Father, we thank you for Jesus, the pioneer of our faith, and the one who gave himself to it in perfect commitment, showing us how life could be lived well. We thank you that he endured the cross for our salvation, scorned its shame, and is seated at your right hand in glory.

We acknowledge the things that hinder our faith: our laziness; our lack of focus; our preference for an easy life; our getting carried along with the world and its

vainglorious ways. Forgive us for getting tangled up with things that are unworthy of you.

And now, O Lord, we remember the great cloud of witnesses in heaven who cheer us on in the race of life. We fix our eyes again on Jesus, and we seek to run the race, and to persevere in our faith. Help us, gracious heavenly Father, to live our lives with a resolute commitment to serving your glorious reign of grace and truth. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen

We echo some of those words of the Lord's Prayer in our next song: *O the valleys shall ring*.

Song (WT 329) O The Valleys Shall Ring

Verse

O the valleys shall ring with the sound of praise,
And the lion shall lie with the lamb.
Of His government there shall be no end,
And His glory shall fill the earth.

Chorus

May Your will be done,

May Your kingdom come,

Let it rule, let it reign in our lives.

There's a shout in the camp

As we answer the call,

Hail the King!

Hail the Lord of lords!

Repeat Verse and *Chorus*

Repeat *Chorus*

Repeat last line

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Let us give thanks for the service of Queen Elizabeth II to the commonwealth and to our country.

Heavenly Father, at the start of her Platinum Jubilee, we give thanks for the long life and exemplary service of our Queen. We bless you for the clear decision she made to serve her country for her whole life. We thank you for the manner of that service: for her dignity, impartiality, wisdom, breadth of interest, grace, resolve and strength. We thank you for her Christian faith, which, from the beginning, has sustained her spirit and guided her reign; and for the discretion and openness with which she shares her faith in public life. We thank you that she has inspired millions of people over seventy years of service; and has given wise counsel to prime ministers, archbishops and public figures across the world. Thank you that she has galvanised our nation, and given us a sense of purpose, of dignity, of continuity and of history. During this special year, we ask you to bless her, to make your face shine upon her and to grant her peace. Amen.

We sing together the National Anthem...

Hymn (BPW 712) **God Save Our Gracious Queen**

Verse 1

God save our gracious Queen,
Long live our noble Queen,
God save the Queen!
Send her victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the Queen!

Verse 2

Thy choicest gifts in store;
On her be pleased to pour;
Long may she reign:
May she defend our laws,
and ever give us cause
To sing with heart and voice
God save the Queen.

Offertory Prayer

Loving Lord, we live to serve others and give glory to your name. Please take our gifts to church and foodbank and multiply them into a wonderful blessing for your world. Amen.

Our prayers of intercession are led this week by Peter Fearn.

Prayers of Intercession

The Bible is filled with examples of men and women who lifted up others in prayer, and Ephesians 6:18 tells us to: “*pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.*”

With this in mind and as a community of God, let us pray.

Lord Jesus, we think firstly of the children of the world: Keep them healthy and help them to thrive. We thank you that you know every hair on their head. You know exactly when they rise and when they fall. Watch over all children in every area of

their lives. We pray that through the challenges of school life, exams, and future decisions, you would lead them, guide them and bring them comfort. Keep them under your loving, watchful eye.

We give thanks for teachers, parents and family life and pray for your guardianship in bringing strength and wisdom to hearts and minds in their daily living.

Lord, strengthen our own families and those closest to us. May our love for you help us to love and forgive others and make a difference in our world.

We lift up those in our neighbourhood, in our city, and in our church.

We consider those who govern us both nationally and locally. Raise up leaders who will serve you faithfully at all costs and surround them with godly counsellors who will exercise integrity and work for justice, morality, and freedom.

We pray for the lost, the hurting, the lonely, the sick, the bereaved, and those who are imprisoned—behind both visible and invisible walls. Send your comfort, your peace, and your calming presence to those who are without hope. Protect the defenceless, and hold them close to your heart. We pray for all who tell the good news of Jesus to people around our world and we ask for safety and justice for persecuted believers. Make them brave, and give them your powerful protection. Strengthen believers everywhere.

In a moment of quiet we remember Sandra & Derek, Tina & John, Chrissy, Barbie, Brian, and those known to us personally who are in need of feeling your closeness.

Loving Jesus, your name is powerful, and your power is great. So it's in your name that we believe and pray.

Amen

Thanks for those prayers Peter. We hear our Bible readings now from Joshua and from 1 Corinthians...

Bible Readings

Joshua 1:1-8

Joshua installed as leader

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant: **2** 'Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these

people, get ready to cross the River Jordan into the land I am about to give to them – to the Israelites. ³ I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. ⁴ Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates – all the Hittite country – to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. ⁵ No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

The need for self-discipline

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Joshua and Paul had commitment and courage to live their lives well. We pray for comparable courage and commitment as we sing our next song, *Men of faith...*

Song (WT 292) **Men of Faith**

Verse 1

Men of faith rise up and sing
Of the great and glorious King.
You are strong when you feel weak,
In your brokenness complete.

Chorus

*Shout to the north and the south,
Sing to the east and the west,
Jesus is Saviour to all,
Lord of heaven and earth.*

Verse 2

Rise up women of the truth,
Stand and sing to broken hearts,
Who can know the healing power
Of our awesome King of love.

Chorus

We've been through fire,
We've been through rain,
We've been refined
By the pow'r of His name.
We've fallen deeper
In love with You,
You've burned
The truth on our lips.

Chorus

Verse 3

Rise up church with broken wings
Fill this place with songs again
Of our God who reigns on high;
By His grace again we'll fly.

Chorus x 2

*Shout to the north and the south,
Sing to the east and the west,
Jesus is Saviour to all,
Lord of heaven and earth.*

Lord of heaven and earth,
Lord of heaven and earth.

And now I speak in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Sermon

A Resolute Life

So, what makes a resolute leader? And if we are not leaders, should we make our own lives more resolute anyway?

A resolute life... I looked up the definition of 'Resolute' in some online dictionaries. They suggest:

- *Determined in character, action or ideas or*
- *Admirably purposeful, determined, and unwavering*

Could those words be used to describe you or anyone you know? Could they be applied to figures in public life?

Let's think briefly about a patriarch, an apostle and a queen and see whether we find any illumination.

First the **patriarch**: Joshua. Now I reckon it's fair to say we have only a stylised summary of his life from the books of Moses and from the book that bears Joshua's name. It would be vain to attempt to reconstruct what the real man Joshua was actually like, so I will take the text at face value, and see what **it** is aiming to teach us about leadership, and about living a resolute life.

The passage we heard read from Joshua is a classic. If ever you're feeling lily-livered about something, have a read of Joshua 1 and galvanise your spirit!

Joshua 1 begins with a death, and therefore a power vacuum. Moses is no more, and a new leader is required. Joshua has been Moses' trusted assistant and is ready to respond to the call.

Joshua has a **very clear vision**, given by God. He understands, and could write down, what it is that God is asking him to do. His goal is measurable, because he knows what he is setting out to achieve: the conquest of a wide territory for the tribes of Israel to settle within.

That vision is underpinned by a **serious spiritual life**. In Exodus we read that Joshua would wait on the Lord in the Tabernacle as Moses ascended Mount Sinai.

And now we find that he is to keep this Book of the Law always on his lips; meditate on it day and night, so that he may be careful to do everything written in it.

Joshua is **servicing his people and his God**, not himself. His aim is not self-aggrandisement, but the liberation and prosperity of the people he serves.

And therefore Joshua can sense in his spirit a **deep conviction** that he is doing things right. God's voice within him says: *Be strong and courageous*, and again, *Be strong and very courageous*. That call to strength and courage comes in the context of the other points. His life and his leadership are founded on a serious spirituality, honed into a clear vision, and committed to serving others. Therefore the call to courage rings true!

Now Joshua is a hero of conquest and a man of bloodshed. No enlightened person would welcome his mission if transferred to a modern scenario. Nevertheless, as a model of resolute life and leadership, he has much to offer us.

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Next the **Apostle**, Paul. Unlike the case of Joshua, we have several personal letters Paul wrote, so it's easier to get close to the man. Let's begin with some criticism. He was not setting about the reform of society. In practical terms, he doesn't really challenge patriarchy and nor does he set out to abolish slavery, though both of those would be the natural ramifications of his deeper thinking. So why does he **not** aim for social reform? Quite simply, he felt that the end of the world as we know it was coming very soon with the return of Christ. He was wanting to hurry souls into the kingdom before it was too late.

Another criticism of Paul might be that he sometimes seems obsessive. We heard at the end of chapter 9 of his undisputed first letter to the Corinthians. Paul's rhetoric earlier in this chapter was about himself in his role as an apostle. He has the right, he feels, to take a wife and receive material reward on his travels. But he chooses not to use these rights, because he doesn't want anything to frustrate the gospel he is compelled to preach. He says "*... we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.*" He goes out of his way to share the gospel, being a Jew to Jews and a Gentile to Gentiles. He is weak with the weak and strong with the strong. He will do whatever it takes "for the sake of the gospel".

Is this obsession, or a resolute life: one who is *admirably purposeful, determined, and unwavering* in the words of our dictionary definition? Perhaps any resolute life risks straying into an unbalanced obsession.

For all my criticism of Paul, I am a huge fan of his theology, his honesty, his commitment and his writing. In the section we heard, Paul offers two images to help us think through living a resolute life, and to explain his own sense of resolve.

The first picture is of a runner. Now occasionally I might still go on a run. If it's not raining. If it's not freezing cold. If it's not boiling hot. If it fits in with the rest of my plan for the day... Well, of course, I am not going to win any running medals with this lackadaisical attitude.

Olympic runners might have won a laurel wreath to crown their achievement. Yet, even for such a fading crown, people were prepared to train seriously and consistently.

The application to spiritual resolve is obvious. We are running to win a **heavenly** crown which endures forever. How much more must a Christian be resolute as they live out their lives in the light of the gospel.

Then Paul's next image is a bit odd. He paints a picture of a boxer. There's no point, he says, in a boxer beating ineffectually at the air! If a boxer wants to achieve something, he - or she - needs to **hit the target**.

But here's the odd bit - the target in Paul's mind is the boxer's own body! *This is not an encouragement to self-harm, but rather to **self-discipline***. A resolute life is one in which the leader - or the serious Christian - embeds a healthy self-discipline into their daily life. This might include a commitment to a wholesome lifestyle; a turning away from obviously harmful pursuits; and the adoption of a consistent framework for personal spiritual activity. This last which might include morning prayers, scripture reading, an evening examination of the conscience, a regular praying of the Lord's Prayer, and belonging to a church.

To lead in a resolute way, or to live a resolute life, requires self-discipline. It won't just happen. To be resolute involves taking oneself in hand!

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I hesitate to make many remarks on the resolute life of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I know some of my listeners are Republicans and that's fine. But I hope we all can say, given that we have a monarchy, the Queen has been a most resolute monarch.

I don't think I risk the Tower of London if I remark that Queen Elizabeth, like the aforementioned patriarch and apostle, is an imperfect human being. I am not a great enthusiast for following all the details of the royal family like some real-life soap opera, but I can recall her slowness to grasp the national mood after the death of Princess Diana. And in preparing for this talk, I read of her regret at her decision to delay by a week a visit to the scene of the Aberfan disaster in Wales. Well, no one's perfect, and, my gut tells me, her Majesty learns from her mis-steps, which is a sign of a great leader.

When she began her reign she spoke some celebrated and spine-tingling words from South Africa. Like Joshua, she was placed into her prominent role by the death of her predecessor, in her case, her own father. At this time of grieving, and as history turned on a momentous change, she famously said:

I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service.

At her Silver Jubilee, 25 years later, she reiterated these words.

And now, 70 years on, who can but marvel at her resolute life? She has been through 14 prime ministers from Mr Churchill to Mr Johnson and has embodied in herself a sense of stability, morality and grace that has proved vital to our nation. She has led the commonwealth of 54 nations, bringing that same sense of gravitas, dignity and perspective across the world. She has **stuck with** her words of resolve through the seven decades of tumultuous history.

Like the patriarch and the apostle, her Majesty the Queen's leadership is rooted in her spirituality. She is a devoted Christian who attends church, and is, of course, the head of the Church of England. As Baptists we may beg to differ about the benefits of a state church. But again, given that we have a state church, Elizabeth has been a model of how to use her faith sensitively, but unashamedly, to guide and support public life.

Now to my mind, the monarchy as an institution sometimes seems unwieldy and overblown. And members of “the Firm” get caught up in matters that are unseemly. But none of this blunts my point, Elizabeth has lived a resolute life built on a clear vision of public service and underpinned by a sincere Christian faith. We thank God for giving us such an excellent Queen to reign over us for seventy years.

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So, dear listeners, dear congregation, do you ever feel like a boxer flailing at the air, missing your target? Do you ever feel lily-livered at the prospect of some great challenge ahead? Have you had an annus horribilis, and felt tempted to give up?

If you feel a clearer sense of resolve is for you, here are some pointers.

First of all, **guard your heart**, and root your heart - your emotions and your intention and your plans - in your spiritual life. If you get connected with God at church or in your morning prayer and then drift away as the day’s challenges arise, find a way of reconnecting with God, who is the wellspring of your life, at various points during the day. More on this in a future talk.

Secondly, if you want to be resolute, **clarify what you are aiming for**. Make it specific and open. The Queen has her personal mission statement to serve the nation and the commonwealth. Joshua knew the land he had to conquer. Paul was clear that his aim was to win souls for Christ. What about you? Why are you here on earth? What would your personal mission statement look like? Why not have a go at writing it this week?

And finally, in view of all this, how about accepting some healthy self-discipline? Once you have your connection with God and your mission statement, is it time to cut out of your life those things that detract from your goal in life? Again, more on spiritual self-discipline in a future talk.

In closing, I have briefly explored the notion of a resolute life, especially thinking about resolute leaders. May God grant us resolute leaders as a nation, who can guide us from a clear, openly-declared vision, nourished by a sincere spirituality or moral framework in which they themselves are firmly anchored. And may God grant us the discernment to recognise them.

Hymn (BPW 573) **There's a Wideness in God's Mercy**

1 There's a wideness in God's mercy,
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice
which is more than liberty.

2 There is no place where earth's sorrows
are more felt than up heaven:
there is no place where earth's failings
have such kindly judgement given.

3 For the love of God is broader
than the measure of man's mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.

4 But we make his love too narrow
By false limits of our own,
And we magnify its strictness
With a zeal he will not own.

5 There is plentiful redemption
in the blood that has been shed;
there is joy for all the members
in the sorrows of the head.

6 If our love were but more simple,
we should take him at his word;
and our lives be filled with gladness,
from the presence of the Lord.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;
And the love of God;
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with us all, evermore. Amen

Sung Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you
Wherever he may send you;
May he guide you through the wilderness;
Protect you through the storm;
May he bring you home rejoicing
At the wonders he has shown you;
May he bring you home rejoicing
Once again into our doors.