

[A Very Royal Family \(June 2022\)](#)

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by Rev Paul Graham

We're getting closer to the summer. The sound of leather on willow as the Great British Raindance gets into full swing across the country; the satisfying "thwack" of another mosquito thwarted on its quest to irritate the dozing watcher; the yell of pain as the gardener overstretchs in their quest for a fresh lettuce for lunch; the smell of strawberries and cream as yet another Wimbledon passes by in white-clad glory; the slightly gritty taste of sand-dusted ice creams at the beach. All herald the delights of the summer that is arriving at some haste.

With an April largely devoid of its eponymous showers, and a May with only one Bank Holiday, this year is already shaping up to be something unusual. Of course, the reason for the single Bank Holiday gives the month of June a uniqueness of its own; we've never had a monarch reign over this country for 70 years. Only France and Thailand can boast kings with longer tenures on the throne, and they may yet be overtaken in the coming years (months even).

Looking through the Old Testament, with Israel and Judah working their way through any number of monarchs, even the best that they can come up with is 55 years of King Manasseh (King David, the most famous of them, only lasted 40 years before being succeeded by his son, Solomon). Granted, most of them "did evil in the eyes of the Lord", so were doomed from the outset, or ran into opposition from invading hordes or offspring who thought that they could do better.

So, our Queen's reign is one of note, irrespective of our view of the monarchy. Whether we think that she is a bastion of all that is good and great about our nation, or that she is just a good egg, or that she is a relic of an Empire that long ago breathed its last, there is no denying her longevity and resilience. Photos of her sitting isolated and alone at the funeral of her beloved Prince Philip at the height of the lockdowns last year may have been hijacked for political point scoring, but it gave us all a glimpse of her humanity, her vulnerability, and her integrity. Equally, her previous Christmas broadcasts, such as the infamous "annus horribilis" speech of 1992, when she should have been lauding her 40th year on the throne, gave us a glimpse under the crown, as it were, at the person below.

What is also laudable is her constant Christian faith. Latterly coming to the fore in her annual festive speeches, the Queen often cites Jesus as the example to follow, or the ways that her faith has sustained her. For someone who has never lacked for any material thing, her need for a Saviour shows that the gospel is for all, not just the badly off. There is room within God's family for royalty, as well as the poor.

So, whether you are putting up your bunting and have already got your Union flag temporary tattoo in anticipation of the 3rd of June, or can't quite see what the fuss is all about and would rather wait for the 5th of November, the message is the same: there is room in the family of God for royalist and republican. Whether you are facing the current cost of living crisis with trepidation or nonchalance; whether you are wondering if the current war in Ukraine is the appetiser for a coming apocalypse or an opportunity to show that welcoming strangers into our homes is a demonstration of prayer in action; or whether you are incensed or ambivalent about the events in Downing Street during the pandemic, there is room in God's family for you as well.

John writes the following prayer to seven Asian churches at the start of the book of Revelation. Those of us who (in the same way as the Queen) proclaim the name of Jesus can include ourselves in this prayer, even though it was written nearly two thousand years ago. We know who the real ruler is.

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, ... , and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.