

Giving Homage

by Linda Rex

May 21, 2023, Ascension Sunday—As I was listening to the Archbishop of Canterbury give his sermon during the recent coronation service for King Charles III and Queen Camilla, I was struck by his reminder that our leadership must always be grounded in a spirit of service, specifically, the Spirit of Christ. He pointed his listeners to the humble servant leadership of Jesus Christ, who willingly wore a royal robe of suffering rather than the rich robes of a kingly wardrobe. He noted our Lord's attention to the widows, orphans, and captives of the world.

Whether or not the oaths the king and queen took during the coronation ceremony penetrated deeply and set the course of their service we cannot know. In any case, the reality is that they answer to the Supreme Sovereign, Jesus Christ, who reigns forever as Lord of all. How they respond to his lordship in the Spirit will determine the outcome of their leadership going forward. And indeed, they and every other leader in this world must answer to King Jesus Christ, who reigns over our cosmos as King of kings and Lord of lords.

As the king and queen walked out of the church to sit in their royal carriage, I noticed how few people gave them the customary nod or curtsy due to royalty. In the Commonwealth, the king and queen are more figurehead than actual rulers, so it is understandable that people no longer strictly attend to the customs of bowing to them. But this made me think of our own response to our divine King Jesus.

The Lord of all, Creator and Sustainer of all, took on our human flesh to live our life and die our death at the hands of sinful people. Jesus Christ rose from the grave and ascended to our heavenly Father's right hand. There in the Spirit Jesus reigns supreme, bearing our glorified human flesh in the presence of the divine Majesty.

Even though the resurrected Christ has been crowned Lord of all, how many of us live indifferent to Jesus' sovereignty? How many of us refuse to bow the knee or acknowledge that Jesus has the right to dictate our actions and behaviors, our decisions and choices? Are we willing to offer Jesus the customary nod or curtsy at church and then live our life as we please the rest of the week?

It is instructive that even our modern approach to the acknowledgment of royal position reflects our common human attitude towards the Divine One. Perhaps what we need most of all in our world today is the true humility of submitting ourselves completely to Jesus Christ, to the sovereign will of his Holy Spirit. Perhaps we need to commit ourselves to obeying his instructions as the living Word, following him by the Spirit through death of self into new life in service to others. It is possible that our struggles today on every level of society are simply because we have refused to submit to Jesus Christ as our Lord, the King of kings. May God by his Spirit restore to our hearts a humble submission to Jesus Christ.

In truth, just as there were those who pledged their allegiance to the king and queen and offered them homage, there are many today who faithfully seek to honor and obey our Lord Jesus. Leaders who approach their role in such a spirit of humility and service are an inspiration to all of us who seek to follow Christ. We follow such leaders as they follow Christ and serve others. May God provide us with many such leaders in every walk of life. And in this way, may God's kingdom begin to transform our world in a real way even today.

Heavenly Father, forgive our irreverence and pride. Lord Jesus, forgive our rebellion and disrespect towards you. Heavenly Spirit, grant us the grace to bow

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our hearts and submit our lives every moment to our Living Lord Jesus Christ. May your kingdom, Father, Son, Spirit, be realized even now here on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

“For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Ephesians 1:15–23 NASB

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