

Now, I gotta admit, I didn't get all wrapped up in King Charles's Coronation all that much. I know, in the Episcopal World, that's a shocking thing to say. Good thing our bishop's on sabbatical. But seriously, I don't care all that much about the monarchy. I mean, I liked Queen Elizabeth. I especially liked the corgis and the floofy hats. But the monarchy itself? Meh. I've never been big on tabloid stories or the terrible secrets The Firm hides behind crenelated walls. Mostly, I just dig telling people that whoever's sitting on the throne is my boss's boss's boss's boss. And even that's only partly true.

Bishop DeDe is my boss, but our hierarchy in the church is funky. Michael Curry, the Presiding Bishop, doesn't really have authority over Bishop DeDe or me, for that matter, which is weird. Can you imagine the Presiding Bishop asking us to change a hymn and me just saying, "No, I don't think we will." *Technically*, we could.

The next line up on the hierarchy is the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. But even the good ol' ABC doesn't have authority over our Presiding Bishop, or DeDe, or me. I mean, he's the head-ish of our church, but he only has real canonical authority within the Diocese of Canterbury itself. Everywhere else, he may be the closest thing we've got to a pope, but even the worldwide figurehead of the second largest Christian denomination on the planet doesn't get much say outside his backyard.

And then on top of the heap, my boss's sorta boss's sorta boss's sorta boss, sits the monarch of England, now Charles the Third. See, the King of England (or the Queen, when we've got one of those, may she rest in peace) is the head of the Church of England and, by default, the head of worldwide Anglicanism. This is why so many Episcopalians have such an Anglophile streak. But again, *technically*, if King Chuck came to St. Thomas' next Sunday, we could turn down any of his special requests. Might not be the wisest thing to do, but we *could*.

Now, I don't want to come off as a total antimonarchist, but I don't love the social implications of royalty. For one thing, having royalty implies there's folks that aren't royal. For another, the whole idea of how monarchies get established points back to antiquated and inherently repressive practices. As Monty Python put it, "Strange women lying in ponds, distributing swords, is no basis for a system of government." But, I'm also not such a grump that I can't get a kick out of the spectacle. It's a rare thing to see a coronation. They just don't come around all that often, assuming there's no Oliver Cromwells lurking in the shadows. As someone who reads a lot of fantasy and plays D&D, how couldn't I get a kick out of the Stone of Destiny making its way from Scotland, or the Sword of Offering covered in lions and rubies and diamonds nestled in a scabbard nicer than any pair of socks I'll ever own, or the literal Silver Spoon older than Robin Hood with a fantastical journey? I do get a kick out of this stuff, but it troubles me, too.

I'm sure you've heard about the contested collections at the British Museum, all sorts of artifacts collected from all over the world. I'm told it's a wonderful one-stop-shop to experience cultures separated by distance and time. As far as the British Empire spread, which was pretty much everywhere, Brits brought stuff home. But it's not as simple as keepsakes and tourist shop chatchkes. As it turns out, many of the items in the British Museum were pilfered by the East India Company, mementos of colonization and exploitation. Even one of the massive crown jewels was a source of great debate, and it was only recently returned home rather than perpetuating the insult to existing cultures.

There's a British comedian named James Acaster. He's got a bit about the British Museum. He says, "Now it's the modern day, and all those countries we stole stuff from are asking for their stuff back. But don't look worried, we're totally saying a blanket no. So what? Finders keepers. In our defense, 'finders keepers' has worked pretty well for us so far. There's no disputing your stuff once belonged to you, and there's no disputing

who took it. In fact, we've written whole books about it, put it in a big glass display case lit from six sides, and put a big plaque next to it saying what it is and a paragraph underneath saying how important it is to you and your culture, and then you come in and say, 'Hey, can we have our stuff back?' And we say, 'Absolutely not. We're still looking at it.'" I guess what gets me about all this spectacle and the show of power and the fraught system of government that relies on a group of people with no connection to the commoners ("commoners" these days is just the more palatable version of "peasants"), I guess what gets me about all this is that it's such a show of audacious wealth. The coronation itself cost roughly \$125 million.

For those of you who saw our church instagram last week, I've got the same problem with the Met Gala. I admit to being fascinated by the who-wore-what pics. But it feels kinda like the Hunger Games where we all get distracted by shiny people while the cost of groceries, housing, education, and healthcare skyrocket; while mass shootings have become so rampant that other countries issue travel warnings to people considering visiting here; while meanness and cruelty dominate our political discourse. But hey, at least the King gets to hold his scepter, the British Museum gets to hold onto 6,000 sets of human remains, and Karl Lagerfeld finally gets his recognition.

In a little bit of a flashback, today we hear Jesus tells his Disciples that he's going on ahead to prepare a place for them. "In my Father's house, there are many dwelling places." Now, some of you are King James types, so you're probably used to hearing that as mansions. "In my Father's house, there are many mansions." Some of you might remember it as rooms instead, "in my Father's house, there are many rooms." They all work, just depends on how majestic your translator wanted heaven to be. Whether it's rooms or dwelling places or mansions, there's a spot for us all. And that's kinda comforting to imagine. Look, I don't know what waits on the other side of the grave. But I like to imagine it being something like this: a nice neighborhood where everyone lives, and when you first get there, the neighbors pop over to meet the new family in town, complete with big smiles and casseroles. It just sounds nice.

But I think I've missed something all the times I've preached this passage. I've focused on the rooms or the dwelling places or the mansions. I've thought about where I'm gonna get to go and what it's gonna be like. And I've forgotten so much of the other stuff Jesus talked about. 'Cause I think at least part of this is less about where I'm gonna lay my head and more about the fact that there will be a place for my head. And a place for yours. And a place for anyone you've met, anyone you've admired, anyone you've ignored. Whether it's a monastic cell or a castle in the highlands, it's the same for everyone. Jesus goes to prepare a place for us, and we all get the same thing. In death, we're all equal. You know, that reading is one of the big ones we hear at funerals, and equality in death is a major theological aspect of that service. The liturgy is the same, the vestments the same, the candle the same, regardless of how much money or influence the deceased had. That's actually why we use the pall -- that big beautiful blanket that lays over the casket -- we use the pall so that no one can tell if your casket's made from mahogany with platinum hardware or pinewood with rope handles.

Jesus told a parable about Lazarus and a rich man, and the rich man's biggest flaw was that everyday he walked right by Lazarus, a poor beggar who slept in front of the rich man's gates. His wealth blinded him to the poor man begging for scraps from his table. In another parable, a different rich man came to Jesus and asked what he could do to follow him. He'd done all the right things, so surely he could check off the boxes and coast to that heavenly shore. But Jesus told him to sell all his possessions and give the money to the poor. In yet another parable, Jesus describes yet another rich man who fills up his barn with goods so he'll be ready for anything. But he keeps hoarding and hoarding and never shares even a sheaf with another soul. In each of these parables and many others, Jesus reminds us that there are other people we're accountable to, and if he gets his druthers, there will be no rich or poor, there will be no king or commoner, there will be no homed or homeless. There will be a place for all, and all the same. A dwelling place, a room, maybe a mansion. But instead of a

mansion for me while everyone else gets a nice doublewide, it's mansions for all. Or doublewides for all. "In my Father's house, there are many doublewides," while maybe not the most luxurious image, it is an equitable one. And I'd much rather live in a doublewide knowing someone else could too than in a mansion while they beg at my gates. But who says we gotta wait until the grave for us to be equal?

I started all this talk about haves and have nots with my boss's boss's boss's boss, and I gotta admit, I do kinda want to see that Stone of Destiny in-person. I'm still having a hard time with that part of myself that looks at that egregious display (and many like it) with wonder. I like shiny things. And I'm in awe of the beauty people create in this world. And my God, do I like a good liturgy. But I'm painfully aware of the beggar at the gates, the sick that can't afford healthcare, the homeless that can't catch a break, the innocent persecuted for who they love. And I'm painfully aware of the equitable picture Jesus paints, of what could be, if humanity could just get ourselves out of the way.