

THE DAY BEFORE THE CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III

5th May 2023

Good Morning

Very early tomorrow there'll be a lot of looking in the mirror as the military don their uniforms to escort the King and Queen to Westminster Abbey.

We'll not have seen such a spectacle for 70 years.

After the last Coronation, a Cambridge Professor wrote:

"The Coronation Service is a mirror as no other .. institution can be, of the historical process ... in which our nation has been formed ..".

But it'll be more than a mirror. The Oaths the King will take will reveal just how our Nation is constituted and governed.

It'll hold before us the gravity of the law and the imperative of justice and mercy. The Coronation Service is, in effect, our written constitution.

With authority from God the Sovereign will devolve power to the instruments of State and Church. This ceremony goes back a thousand years but couldn't be more relevant. You'll not find this word in the liturgy but it's all about 'accountability'. And in an imperfect world that's the most abrasive brake on the abuse of power.

The malaise that demoralises so many today stems from the way those with power have abused it for their own ends without any sense of being accountable.

It's led to a lack of confidence in businesses and banks, in politics and the police, in the media and in governments.

Tomorrow the focus will be on the King who'll be anointed in the belief that He's accountable in two directions – to His people and to God.

Not everybody will want to say 'amen' to all the prayers, but His pledge not to be served but to serve will, I suspect, move some of us – not just emotionally, but to rethink our own values.

When I was a boy at a military boarding school the Headteacher often ended Assembly with this counter-cultural ambition:

'Teach us ... to serve Thee as Thou deservest/ to give and not to count the cost/ to fight and not to heed the wounds/..... / to labour and not to ask for any reward.'

If, after tomorrow, that's what we, as a nation, begin to see when we look in the mirror – then the Coronation will have served an even more noble purpose.

The Right Reverend James Jones KBE