

On the Occasion of the School's Service of Celebration for the Coronation of King Charles III

Assembly by Revd Tom Handy, School Chaplain, May 2023

Two friends were walking in the middle of a busy, noisy, city. The streets were filled with people, cars were honking their horns, vans were squealing around corners, and sirens were wailing. Suddenly, one friend stops and says,

"I hear a cricket".

Her friend was astounded.

"What? You must be crazy! You couldn't possibly hear a cricket in all of this noise".

"No, I'm sure of it", she said. "I heard a cricket".

"Not a chance", her friend dismissed her.

So the first friend listened carefully for a moment, and then walked across the road to where some shrubs were growing. She looked into the bushes and sure enough, he located a small cricket.

Her friend was utterly amazed.

"That's incredible", her friend exclaimed. "You must have super-human ears!"

"No", came the reply, "My ears are no different from yours".

"But that can't be!" said the friend, "I could never hear a cricket in this noise".

"Yes, you could", she replied with a smile. "Here, let me show you".

She reached into her pocket, pulled out a few coins, and dropped them on the pavement. And then, with the noise of the crowded street still blaring in their ears, they noticed every head within five metres turn and look to see if the money that tinkled on the pavement was theirs.

"See what I mean"? Asked the first friend. "It all depends on what's important to you, on what you're listening for".

In a busy, noisy world listening sometimes needs to be very deliberate. We will hear what we are tuned into. I don't mean literal 'noise', but in the sense that there is so much

competing for our attention and our hearts.

I don't know what it felt like for King Charles at his coronation last week but just watching it, as I'm sure many of you did, there was a lot going on. There were all sorts of ways that your care and attention could be pulled. Words, music, unfamiliar movements and symbols. There were people, some famous, some unknown, facial expressions, stories, gossip. There were no doubt all sorts of opinions in your own families, amongst your friends and in your own minds. Some who felt patriotic, proud, emotional. Some, maybe, who felt annoyed or totally disinterested. All sorts of influences pulling at us like a busy, noisy, crowded street.

I do wonder whether King Charles might have known this in some way and I wonder whether this is why, surrounding the coronation with all of its possible different angles, he tried to give us a particular focus to consider. We have been encouraged to give something of our time and effort to volunteering with something, in some way. To give some act of service as we recognise the crowning of a King who is entering a life of public service. There will be, I know, opportunities through the school and you might even have some ideas of your own.

Perhaps amongst all that the coronation speaks of, amongst the busyness of our own lives we might like to think of this invitation to volunteer as a 'coin drop' or even a 'cricket song' moment, a call to focus, a question to address, something to tune into. This is a way to make the coronation not just about one man wearing a crown but about all of us. About, as Prince William put it recently in an interview, looking to the future with hope.

We might like to think about the Bible reading that we heard earlier which spoke about God being able to work within us and through us more than we can possibly imagine. We might be tempted think of volunteering in small terms even saying "what difference can I possibly make with my hour or two"?

Well, a final illustration to leave you with. Many of you will play Minecraft - and I don't blame you (don't get overexcited, that's not a volunteering opportunity). An hour or two (or three) spent here and there. But do you know the estimated global total of hours spent in an average year of everybody playing Minecraft? Have a think...

The global total of Minecraft hours played adds up to around 17.1 million years. 17.1 million! That's time on a geological scale! There is, as the Bible reading says, the potential for a power and love at work amongst us that is more than we might be able to imagine. Where the little that we offer is magnified through our common effort. I'll let you do the maths for

how many hours of giving time there might be amongst this school alone. Time that when offered in service and love together has the chance to have a real, world changing impact.

So as we celebrate the coronation - whatever it might mean to us - perhaps allow the call to your time and service to sound like the drop of a coin, or a cricket song, in a crowded street and joyfully acknowledge with our response the world changing potential that is powerfully amongst us.