



Read the text of Archbishop Justin Welby's sermon:

You knit me together in my mother's womb... I thank you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made [Psalm.139:12]

Ninety years ago, Her Majesty The Queen was born, like every human being knit together in her mother's womb, and today we thank God for the way in which she, like every human being, is fearfully and wonderfully made.

Before we ever come to light, God marks our journeys. No one at The Queen's birth knew for what she was destined. Today we recognise that God knew.

You encompass me behind and before and lay your hand upon me [Ps.139: 4]

Sixty-three years ago at the Coronation, again in the words of the Psalmist, God uniquely laid his hand upon Her Majesty, anointing her as our Head of State, our Monarch.

We are here today to worship the God who made our Queen, and to celebrate the way in which God's hand has been so uniquely evident in her life.

Psalm 139 explores fear and wonder, and the connection between them.

In life there is much to fear. Over and again the Psalm describes those things we might be afraid of – the fears we harbour individually as well as the fears we share corporately. Fear makes us want to flee – from God, from one another, often even from ourselves. But over and again that fear is turned into wonder as we see that God is before, behind and beyond it.

Over the 63 years and the 90 years there has been much to fear: at times of personal challenge or national crisis. But just as the psalmist sees through fear to something more stirring and more extraordinary, so we look back on Your Majesty's 90 years in the life of our nation with deep wonder and profound gratitude. Through war and hardship, through turmoil and change, we have been fearfully and wonderfully sustained.

The one who turns fear to wonder is Jesus. The story of Jesus shows us that God enters into the most fearful places imaginable in our lives – of sin, betrayal, violence, rejection, even death – and turns each one of them from horror into glory.

Nothing is outside God's understanding. Nothing is beyond God's grace. Nothing is too broken for God's transformation. No one can flee from God's redeeming goodness or finally escape God's loving attention.

'Consider the lilies, how they grow,' says Jesus. They too are the handwork of God who clothed them in glory, from the overflow of his love and care. How much more does God care for and clothe each one of us.

Your Majesty, today we rejoice for the way in which God's loving care has fearfully and wonderfully sustained you, as well as Prince Philip marking his 95th birthday today.

And we rejoice, Your Majesty, for the way in which the life God has given you in turn you have given wonderfully in service to this nation. You have been an instrument of God's peace, and through you God has so often turned fear into wonder – and joy.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-and-writing/sermons/archbishop-preaches-queens-90th-birthday-thanksgiving-service>