

7<sup>th</sup> June 2022

## Jubilee

**"The law does not permit anyone permanently to retain possession of the property of others but blockades and stops up the roads of covetousness for the sake of checking desire, that treacherous passion, that cause of all evils."**

Philo of Alexandria, *On the Virtues*

Last Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022, brought together disparate events. It was Pentecost. It was also my wedding anniversary. We had Communion in our church, an important marker-point in our journey of faith. And in case you think I'd forgotten, 5<sup>th</sup> June was the day of celebration in the UK for the Platinum Jubilee of our Queen's reign. It is remarkable that Queen Elizabeth has reached the seventieth anniversary of her accession to the throne. Much has been said about that, and I have little to add, other than to say in an endearing phrase beloved of some Scots: "Weel dun, auld yin!"

But I want to reflect today on the theme of "jubilee". We think of this exclusively as a marking of an anniversary – and usually an important one. But the concept of "jubilee" goes back to the Old Testament, where we find a different meaning. The book Leviticus enshrines this in the Law:

*Count off seven sabbath years – seven times seven years – to a period of forty-nine years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month ... Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you ... For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields. In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property.*

This jubilee was about justice, freedom from debt, release from oppression. In *The Journal of European Baptist Studies* David Lazonby says

*The first aspect of this legislation is simply that 'In this year of Jubilee you shall return, every one of you, to your property.' Underlying this simple statement is the land division arrangement ... in which every extended family was designated land, meaning that this legislation did not entrench the privileges of the minority but restored the equality, dignity, and economic independence of everyone.*

"Did not entrench the privileges of the minority ..." Might we consider this further? Could it be an important aspect of any jubilee, silver, gold, diamond, platinum or otherwise?

### A prayer for today

*If justice is at the heart of our important days, isn't that worthy of much celebration?*