



Read the full text of Archbishop Justin Welby's sermon for the State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 53 – End

Psalms 42:1-7

John 14:1-6

Come Holy Spirit, fill us with the balm of your healing love. Amen.

The pattern for many leaders is to be exalted in life and forgotten after death. The pattern for all who serve God – famous or obscure, respected or ignored – is that death is the door to glory.

Her Late Majesty famously declared on a 21st birthday broadcast that her whole life would be dedicated to serving the Nation and Commonwealth.

Rarely has such a promise been so well kept! Few leaders receive the outpouring of love that we have seen.

Jesus – who in our reading does not tell his disciples how to follow, but who to follow – said: “I am the way, the truth and the life”. Her Late Majesty’s example was not set through her position or her ambition, but through whom she followed. I know His Majesty shares the same faith and hope in Jesus Christ as his mother; the same sense of service and duty.

In 1953 the Queen began her Coronation with silent prayer, just there at the High Altar. Her allegiance to God was given before any person gave allegiance to her. Her service to so many people in this nation, the Commonwealth and the world, had its foundation in her following Christ – God himself – who said that he “came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”¹

People of loving service are rare in any walk of life. Leaders of loving service are still rarer. But in all cases those who serve will be loved and remembered when those who cling to power and privileges are long forgotten.

The grief of this day – felt not only by the late Queen’s family but all round the nation, Commonwealth and the world – arises from her abundant life and loving service, now gone from us.

She was joyful, present to so many, touching a multitude of lives.

We pray especially for all her family, grieving as every family at a funeral - including so many families round the world who have themselves lost someone recently - but in this family’s case doing so in the brightest spotlight.

May God heal their sorrow, may the gap left in their lives be marked with memories of joy and life.

Her Late Majesty’s broadcast during Covid lockdown ended with: “We will meet again”, words of hope from a song of Vera Lynn. Christian hope means certain expectation of something not yet seen.

Christ rose from the dead and offers life to all, abundant life now and life with God in eternity.

As the Christmas carol says “where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.” ²

We will all face the merciful judgement of God: we can all share the Queen’s hope which in life and death inspired her servant leadership.

Service in life, hope in death. All who follow the Queen’s example, and inspiration of trust and faith in God, can with her say: “We will meet again.”

¹ Matthew 20:28, NRSV

² O Little Town of Bethlehem

3 min read

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