

Life Assurance: The Queen & Constancy - 11th September 2022

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Date: 11 September 2022

Preacher: Matt Wallace

[0 : 00] And so, Father God, in the quiet as we come before you, as we are, knowing that through your spirit you meet each of us where we are, we want to begin with where we're at as a nation and express to you our gratitude and respect for the life, the faith, and the service of our late queen.

Thank you, Lord, for her decades of dedication to duty, for her kind and caring manner. For her example of leading a life of integrity and honour, and for her wisdom in helping to guide and ground the 15 prime ministers who have served during her reign.

Thank you, God, for her unswerving faith in you and for the way she has never been afraid to both stand up for your truth or share your good news through her words and deeds.

We pray today for her family and close friends who will be particularly grieving her loss. May you bring them comfort and peace.

We pray, too, for our nation, those who, maybe like ourselves, grieving the loss of a queen who has been a source of solidity and strength through the changing times in which we live.

[1 : 25] Pray, too, for those for whom the queen's passing has triggered memories and mourning of those close friends and relatives who we have lost over the years. Again, Lord, may your spirit of comfort and peace be poured out on us, on our nation, on the Commonwealth, and all those across the world who have been saddened or affected by the queen's death.

And on the screen, there's a prayer for us all to join in with, please. And so we say, Loving God, we give you thanks for the life of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth.

We give you thanks for her selfless, lifelong service to our nation and for her faith and leadership as a follower of Jesus Christ.

We pray for unity, solidarity, and compassionate hearts as we mourn her death. May her example inspire us all through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. And once again, perhaps as we bow our heads, we pray, God, for our new leaders. We lift up our new king before you.

[2 : 51] And I ask that you will fill him with your peace and purpose at this time. As he undertakes this new role of sovereign in the shadow of the very human grief he'll be feeling for the loss of his mother, may Charles know your strength, your comfort, and your inspiration, we pray.

We pray. We pray too for our new government, for our new Prime Minister, Liz Truss, and the new cabinet she's appointed. These are difficult days for our nation, Lord, where so many are acutely affected by the cost of living crisis and the anxiety which comes with that.

Thank you for the signs of support which have been forthcoming this week with utility bills. And we pray and hope for our government that they will govern in considered and compassionate ways, ways which elevate and empathise with the needs of the poorest and the most neglected in our society.

Equip our opposition to hold our government to account in effective ways, supporting what is good, calling out what is lacking, and proposing alternatives in good faith, we pray.

And again, on the screen, there's a prayer for us all to join him with, please. So we say, loving God, we pray for our new Prime Minister, the government she leads, and all those in authority.

[4 : 30] Equip and inspire them with the wisdom, compassion, skill, and vision they need to lead our country in ways which reflect your goodness and love.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. And once again, as we bow our heads perhaps for a final time, we're grateful, Lord, that we can be here today in your presence and in the company of one another.

And so we want to take this opportunity to lift ourselves and our loved ones before you. These are indeed tough times for so many of us. Times of worry, of anxiety, of need, of difficulty.

So may we, and those close to us who need to know your sustenance at this time, receive a fresh fill of your reassurance, peace, and hope.

would you please find ways to provide for our practical needs and help us to generously play our part in supporting those who are struggling alongside us.

[5 : 48] Lord, please increase our faith and our trust in you, reminding us each day of your faithfulness to us and the love which you show us through the gift of this world, through the person of Jesus, through the presence of your spirit, and through the gift of each other, those with whom we gratefully share this day and share this life.

And on the screen, the Lord's Prayer for us all to join him with, please. And so we pray. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Now, there is so much that we could focus on this morning, but there was a particular tribute on the BBC this week which caught my eye and it feels it might be right to reflect on today as we gather in light of our shared faith.

[7 : 21] So, have a look on the screens once again and see this tribute to Her Majesty. I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service.

piano music to the King standing at voice of the King of the King of the King of the King of the King of the King of the King of the King of the King of the King of the King Outside the palace, a hundred thousand people surged forward in a solid mass.

They wanted Elizabeth. They wanted Philip. Good evening, Your Majesty.

I've just been talking to your Secretary of State for Health. Thank you so much.

That's one small step for man.

[9 : 24] What I say to you now, as your queen and as a grandmother, I say from my heart. First, I want to pay tribute to Diana myself. With the benefit of historical hindsight, we can all see things which we would wish had been done differently or not at all.

What did you do?

Now, one of the remarkable things about the Queen's reign has been just how long it lasted.

70 years as queen meant that she was on the throne for longer than 94% of the world's population have been alive.

Having Elizabeth as our queen is all that most of us have ever known. Her longevity meant that she was one of the few remaining figures whose public life spanned the length of time from World War II right up to the present day.

[10 : 59] And such as we've just seen, she's been a fixed point in our public life through a huge range of events and crises, times of triumph and times of trial.

One journalist described her this week like this, as a figure of continuity when all around was in constant flux.

And that reality, I guess it rises above any debates about monarchies or republics. Because whatever our view, the Queen has simply been there for most, if not all of our lives.

That in itself is a rare quality. But when that constancy is combined with the character and commitment which the Queen has displayed throughout her reign, well, it's little wonder that her passing has brought with it the sense of sadness it has.

Because her death really is in many ways the end of an era. Now, what has sustained her character and commitment to her role, to her country?

[12 : 15] Well, in one of her Christmas speeches, speeches which so often reference the depth of our own Christian faith, the Queen said this, I hope that like me, you will be comforted by the example of Jesus of Nazareth, who, often in circumstances of great adversity, managed to live an outgoing, unselfish and sacrificial life.

Countless millions of people around the world continue to celebrate his birthday at Christmas, inspired by his teaching. He makes it clear that genuine human happiness and satisfaction lie more in giving than receiving, more in serving than in being served.

We can surely be grateful that 2,000 years after the birth of Jesus, so many of us are able to draw inspiration from his life and message and to find in him a source of strength and courage.

You see, just as the Queen herself has given our country such constancy over these past 70 years and more.

So in turn, it's been a lifelong faith in Jesus, which has been her source of constancy. That constancy of faith, expressed by the Queen through the constancy of her reign, has been, I would suggest, her greatest gift, her greatest service to us.

[14 : 00] To have a monarch rooted in the reality of God, a true defender of the faith, has been a blessing for us.

To have someone in her position who, by all accounts, has conducted herself, not just with integrity, but with consistent warmth, wisdom, and wit.

Well, we'll miss her. We'll miss her. And yet, as sad and as significant as it will be to witness her funeral next Monday, the good news, the good news of the Gospel is that the constancy which she both represented in herself and received from her faith, well, that constancy is an ongoing gift which God offers to each of us, offering us the assurance that God's love and God's light is with us every day of our lives.

It's a constancy which Jesus himself highlights the wisdom of relying on through a short parable that he told to the crowds towards the end of his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel.

And here's a clip of that parable from Matthew's Gospel, chapter 7. So, in an opinion, the peace of God is the most powerful thing. It's a very powerful thing. and it's a very powerful thing. Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

[15 : 35] The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall because it had its foundations on the rock.

But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching because he taught as one who had authority and not as their teachers of the law.

And for a Hong Kong Friends? He put a sheriff's plaid at the river.

The winds while having Admiral Kahn and the winds of ■■■ions helped scrutinize the cludisen by Butter. King would step shut into the stick. The strange wandering from Revelation was the mixtures that they showed the people at this time, because he taught them the people of the right and the right and the right and the right.

[17 : 43] As Jesus says, foundations of sand, shifting sands which easily give way under us.

It's no wonder we'll leave ourselves open to instability and inconsistency. You'll have your own ideas about what these dodgy foundations might be in our lives.

I'd probably say in my experience, it's things like building our lives around the goals of material wealth or how we look, how popular we might be, whatever influence we might try to cultivate.

They're all shifting sands. They're all transitory temptations which tease us with fulfilment. But which ultimately won't last. And in light of who we've been looking at today, they won't leave any kind of legacy.

However, foundations of rock, the solid ground on which Jesus says it's worth building our lives. Well, those foundations will be based on less selfish but ultimately far more significant standards.

[19 : 06] Principles to live by which might include generosity, compassion, kindness, humility, patience, service and love.

Those are all qualities. All foundations which can be constant against even the toughest of tests. And there's that word constant again.

A constancy. Which as we said is perhaps one of the greatest gifts which God offers to us. And as we've seen with the Queen, when we draw on the constancy of knowing God's love and peace in our lives, So that constancy enables others to feel assured by us too.

Because we become rocks for each other. Inspired by the way that God is the ultimate rock for us. Inspired by the way that God is the ultimate rock for us.