

**11<sup>th</sup> September 2022**  
**Lamentations 3.22-26, 31-33**  
**John 6.35-40**

## **Humility and Service**

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Minister: For the Word of God in scripture  
**All: For the Word of God among us**  
 Minister: For the Word of God within us  
**All: Thanks be to God. Amen**

Last Sunday the Moderator of the Church of Scotland was invited to preach at Balmoral. He stayed in the castle and said, that at dinner on Saturday, and lunch on Sunday, as he sat around the table with The Queen, The Prince of Wales and The Princess Royal, that the monarch, although frail, was both cheerful and engaged. The Scottish Moderator, a guest in the Queen's Scottish home, had a glimpse of a family, enjoying each other's company and offering gracious hospitality to a welcomed guest.

The word *family* has come to mind over recent days. So, I thought this morning it might just be helpful for us to reflect on this week's news through the prism of that word and think of The Royal Family, our National Family and more personally for us, this, our Church Family.

The Royal Family are in our thoughts and prayers at this time.

We've got rather used to thinking of *The King's Speech* as that excellent film with Colin Firth, yet on Friday evening we heard a real King's Speech, probably the first of many given by our new sovereign. He spoke, very movingly, of his family. He spoke of a mother who he felt he could turn to, of parents who shared a sense of fun with their children, always there and now an inspiring memory. The King spoke of his wife, his eldest son, who along with Catherine becomes the new Prince and Princess of Wales. And he spoke, with gentle love, of Harry and Megan.

In a world that can so often be rather cruel and raw, to hear words of kindness and dignity from our Head of State was surely a worthy beginning to a new reign.

Beside the King, on the desk was a picture of the late Queen, and the

base of the silver vase of flowers was fashioned in the form of three corgis. A nice touch. I'm sure that for all members of the Royal Family the Queen will forever remain a constant source of loving inspiration.

Do you remember the words of St Paul to his young protégé Timothy, he said he remembered the faith of both his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, a faith that he now saw burning so brightly in Timothy himself. A family of faith, in which love and deeply held values had been passed on, so that each succeeding generation was being built on the example of the preceding one.

Our hearts go out today, to a grieving family, and we give thanks that they shared their mother, or grandmother so willingly with us all.

And what of our National Family.

2022 will forever be remembered as a Platinum Jubilee year, a year of highs and lows, of celebration and sorrow.

When The Queen, then a Princess coming to age in Cape Town, made her famous broadcast to serve the Commonwealth whether her life be long or short, no one would have imagined a reign of 70 years, and one that would end just two days after an audience with her 15<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister at which she asked Liz Truss to form a new government. Elizabeth The Second made good her vow made all those years ago.

So, our National Family has been blessed to have had such a sovereign for so long.

We give thanks for her steadfastness. As one commentator put it this week, it is not only her service which is so striking, but her humility.

It's clear that The Queen recognised and valued the service of others. That for her, investitures were so important, an opportunity to honour the efforts of others. As indeed were visits to local communities, like her last ever public engagement in the summer, of visiting a hospice close to Windsor Castle with Princess Anne.

When the boys were young, we spent a week's holiday at the Manse Courtyard Cottages next to Balmoral and got talking to the minister's wife. She told us that every Sunday as the Queen was driven back to the castle from morning service, she asked the chauffeur to slow down, so that as she passed the Cathie war memorial she could turn towards it, from the back of the car, and acknowledge

the fallen. This was her private holiday, no press there, no cameras, just a Queen privately, every week, acknowledging the service of her people.

We have, I believe, been blessed by the immense personal integrity of such a monarch.

In many ways she bound us together. So, it's not surprising that one recipient of the Maundy Money said afterwards, that as the Queen went down the line giving out the famous coins in velvet purses, he felt as if the whole of the country was passing by.

The Queen had no hard power. She reigned rather than ruled. Yet she used her words and actions in an exemplary way in guiding our nation.

During the Pandemic as well as that iconic speech drawing on the phrase *We'll meet again*, she also gave a radio broadcast in which she said *This year we need Easter more than ever*.

Or how about the State Visit to Southern Ireland, Eire, one she regarded as the probably the most important of her reign, an opportunity for reconciliation, deepened even further the next year by a handshake with Martin McGuinness.

Today we give thanks for the dignity and wisdom of Queen Elizabeth, whose service and humility reflected the God of Maundy Thursday.

And finally, this morning, what about our Church Family and us as individuals within it.

The Queen's passing has probably reminded us all of more personal bereavements in our own lives. Maybe the death of our own parents or grandparents. Most of us never knew her personally, yet she almost feels part of our family. Her death, for many, will feel deeply personal. My own brothers, scattered in both this country and overseas, took to WhatsApp on Friday afternoon in a flurry of exchanges, as we expressed to each other our sadness that a Queen who has been there all our lives had died. That national moment became for us a family one – and I guess we were not alone.

Of course, in life change is normal and is happening all the time. Yet there can be values that endure and even mould the change.

At his Ascension, a difficult occasion for the disciples as they bade farewell to their Lord, Jesus encourages them to go on living the gospel, to go out to all the world with his love. The Spirit helps us live the life of Jesus each new day.

It has been said, and I understand why, that some cannot imagine the world without The Queen. Of course, it's meant as a huge compliment to her.

But I want to say this morning that I can imagine such a world. Because I believe in a world in which, under God, love never dies and goodness never comes to an end. Such love and goodness can be wonderfully manifest in a life, like that of our beloved Queen, yet it is never restricted to just one life. It can be handed down, it carries on, and it constantly, wonderfully and often surprisingly finds a new expression.

I think the Queen felt that too. No example inspired her more than that of her father. His courage during the war was her constant inspiration. She lived as if he was always at her side, just as I think our new King and new Prince of Wales will live, with the inspiration of their mother and grandmother at theirs.

And we can live with her example too. And, of course, as Christian people, in both our Church Family and in our service to the wider community, in days of change and challenge our constant inspiration is in the Lord Jesus Christ and all he taught us about the nature of God, of God's love and kindness which is our strength for every day.

I want the last words of my sermon today to be the Queen's words, they inspire me, and I hope they will encourage you, for she once said:

*Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God.*

Thanks be to God for our late Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth the Second, may she rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen

Amersham, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2022