

The Queen, Sunday 18th Sep

Today and tomorrow, we have our final opportunity to say our goodbyes to Her Majesty the Queen. The nation and the world's grief, gratitude, and respect has been poured out over the last week already, and is demonstrated most clearly in "The Queue", which now has its own website, youtube channel, chaplaincy team, and even dedicated weather forecast.

So much has been said about the Queen, there's nothing more I can add really. One of the things that's been said is how we never knew where she stood on any political issues, and yet it was very clear to everyone where she stood in terms of her faith.

So today's sermon will be preached by Her Majesty the Queen herself - by which I mean, everything I say from this point on are quotes from one of her speeches.

"The simple facts of Jesus' life give us little clue as to the influence he was to have on the world. As a boy he learnt his father's trade as a carpenter. He then became a preacher, recruiting twelve supporters to help him. But his ministry only lasted a few years and he himself never wrote anything down. In his early thirties he was arrested, tortured, and crucified with two criminals. His death might have been the end of the story, but then came the resurrection and with it the foundation of the Christian faith."

"I know just how much I rely on my faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. 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 I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel."

And to what greater inspiration and counsel can we turn than to the imperishable truth to be found in this treasure house, the Bible?

"To many of us our beliefs are of fundamental importance. For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life. I, like so many of you, have drawn great comfort in difficult times from Christ's words and example."

"Jesus of Nazareth 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, two thousand 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."

“Many will have been inspired by Jesus’ simple but powerful teaching: love God and love thy neighbour as thyself— in other words, treat others as you would like them to treat you. His great emphasis was to give spirituality a practical purpose.”

“His simple message of love has been turning the world upside down ever since. He showed that what people are and what they do, does matter, and does make all the difference. He commanded us to love our neighbours as we love ourselves, but what exactly is meant by ‘loving ourselves’? I believe it means trying to make the most of the abilities we have been given, it means caring for our talents. It is a matter of making the best of ourselves, not just doing the best for ourselves. We are all different, but each of us has our own best to offer.

The responsibility for the way we live life, with all its challenges, sadness, and joy is ours alone. If we do this well, it will also be good for our neighbours. If you throw a stone into a pool, the ripples go on spreading outwards.”

“Although we are capable of great acts of kindness, history teaches us that we sometimes need saving from ourselves— from our recklessness or our greed. God sent into the world a unique person— neither a philosopher nor a general (important though they are)— but a Saviour, with the power to forgive. Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families; it can restore friendships and it can reconcile divided communities. It is in forgiveness that we feel the power of God’s love.”

“In the last verse of the beautiful carol, O Little Town of Bethlehem, there’s a prayer: O Holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us we pray. Cast out our sin And enter in, Be born in us today. It is my prayer that we might all find room in our lives for the message of the angels and for the love of God through Faith, Hope, and Love”

“God sent His only Son ‘to serve, not to be served.’ He restored love and service to the centre of our lives in the person of Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that his example and teaching will continue to bring people together to give the best of themselves in the service of others.”

‘Christ not only revealed to us the truth in his teachings. He lived by what he believed and gave us the strength to try to do the same – and, finally, on the cross, he showed the supreme example of physical and moral courage.’

In difficult times we may be tempted to find excuses for self-indulgence and to wash our hands of responsibility. Christmas stands for the opposite... we need to go out and look for opportunities to help those less fortunate than ourselves, even if that service demands sacrifice.’

“For Christians, as for all people of faith, reflection, meditation, and prayer help us to renew ourselves in God’s love, as we strive daily to become better people. And the Christmas message shows us that this love is for everyone. There is no one beyond its reach.”

"It has always been easy to hate and destroy. To build and to cherish is much more difficult."

“But when peace comes, remember it will be for us, the children of today, to make the world of tomorrow a better and happier place.”

“I therefore declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong. God help me to make good my vow and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it.

Thank you your Majesty.

Amen